The World went very well then

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/worldwentverywel00besa_0

THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN

II.

NOVELS
BY
WALTER BESANT AND JAMES RICE.

Crown 8vo. cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.* each; post 8vo. illus. boards, 2*s.* each; cloth limp, 2*s.* 6*d.* each.

READY-MONEY MORTIBOY.
WITH HARP AND CROWN.
THIS SON OF VULCAN.
MY LITTLE GIRL.
THE CASE OF MR. LUCRAFT.
THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY.
BY CELIA'S ARBOUR.
THE MONKS OF THELEMA.
'TWAS IN TRAFALGAR'S BAY.
THE SEAMY SIDE.
THE TEN YEARS' TENANT.
THE CHAPLAIN OF THE FLEET.

NOVELS BY WALTER BESANT.

Crown 8vo. cloth extra, 3*s.* 6*d.* each; post 8vo. illus. boards, 2*s.* each; cloth limp, 2*s.* 6*d.* each.

ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN: an Impossible Story. With Illustrations by FRED. BARNARD.

THE CAPTAINS' ROOM, &c. With Frontispiece by E. J. WHEELER.

ALL IN A GARDEN FAIR. With 6 Illustrations by H. FURNISS.

DOROTHY FORSTER. With Frontispiece by CHARLES GREEN.

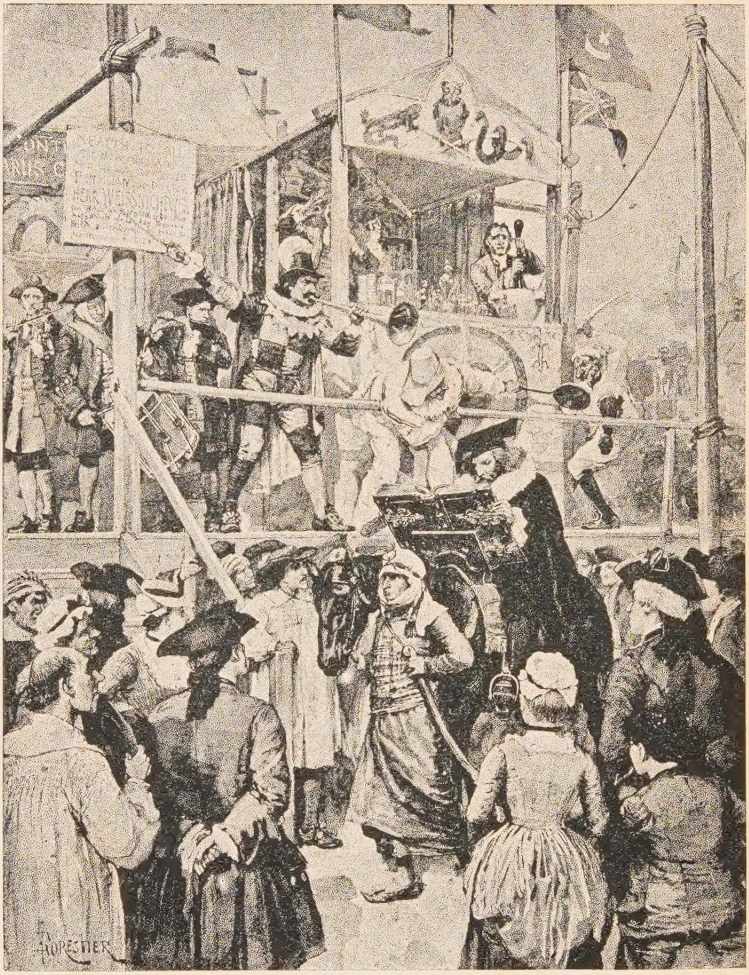
UNCLE JACK, and other Stories.

CHILDREN OF GIBEON. Three Vols.

THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN. Three Vols.

THE ART OF FICTION. Demy 8vo. 1*s.*

London: CHATTO & WINDUS, Piccadilly, W.



'Room for the Doctor, gentlemen!'

THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN

BY

WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF

'ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN' 'DOROTHY FORSTER'
'CHILDREN OF GIBEON' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR BY JOHN PETTIE, R.A.
AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. FORESTIER

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1887

[*The right of translation is reserved*]

FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

'ROOM FOR THE DOCTOR, GENTLEMEN!' . *Frontispiece*

'SHE GAVE HIM A CUP WITH HER OWN HANDS' . . . 309

THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEDDLESOME ASSISTANT.

THE first trouble came to the lovers through the meddlesomeness and malignity of the Apothecary's assistant.

Had Jack known what this man did, I think he would have made him swallow the contents of every bottle in the shop. But he never knew it: nor had he the least reason to suspect the assistant. James Hadlow (which was his name) was a man of small stature and insignificant aspect, made ridiculous by his leathern apron, which covered the front of him from chin to toes, and was too long, having been made for a taller man, his predecessor. His eyes, as has been already stated, were, as to their movements, independent of each other. He seldom spoke, and went about his business steadily and quietly, a man apparently without passions, who had no more compassion for a sick man than for a log of wood; a man who never loved a woman or had a friend, and who, when he was afterwards knocked on the head in a waterman's house of call while dressing wounds caught in a drunken broil, left no one to lament his loss. Neither man nor woman in Deptford ever regarded him at all, any more than one regards the fellow who brings the wine at a tavern.

Yet, which is a thing we should never forget, there is no man so meek that he cannot feel the passion of resentment, and none so weak that he cannot do his enemy a mischief. Now, for something that was said or done or perhaps omitted—I know not what—this man conceived a malignant desire for revenge. I know not which of the three had offended him: perhaps Jack, who was masterful, and despised little and humble men; perhaps Mr. Brinjes himself, who was hard towards his servants; perhaps Bess. But, indeed, if a creeping thing stings one, do we stop to inquire why it hath done us this mischief?

Everybody in the town knew that Aaron Fletcher wanted to marry Bess, and that, in her pride, she would have nothing to say to him, and had refused him a dozen times. It was also known that Aaron went about saying that he would crack the crown of any man who ventured to make love to his girl—calling her openly his girl—even if he were a commissioned officer of the King. When so tall and stout a fellow promises this, young men,

even brave men, are apt to consider whether another woman may not be found as beautiful. Therefore, for some time, those who would willingly have courted Bess kept away from her, and, in the long run, I am sure that Aaron would have triumphed, being constant in his affections, as he was strong and brave. Unhappily for him, Jack Easterbrook returned. First of all, when Aaron came up from Gravesend, a few days later, and became a peaceful boat-builder again, in place of a smuggler, he began to watch and to spy upon the movements of Bess, employing a girl whose father worked for him at his boat-building, and lived in a house nearly opposite to that of Mr. Westmoreland. She reported that Bess stayed at home all day long, and though Lieutenant Easterbrook had been to the house, it was only to see her father, who came to the door and spoke with him there, and Bess never met him. So that, although Aaron heard the story of her recognising him in his rags, he thought little of that, and made up his mind that the Lieutenant had quite forgotten the girl, and cared

no more about her, even if he had ever thought of her; and when Jack, by the grace of my Lords the Commissioners, appeared in his new uniform, he seemed to be so much raised above Bess in rank that it was impossible he should any longer think of her. Moreover, Aaron discovered that the Lieutenant's mornings were spent in the Yard, his afternoons with Mr. Brinjes, and his evenings at the tavern; so that, except for the fact that there was no woman at all in the daily history of the Lieutenant—a suspicious circumstance where a sailor is concerned—he felt satisfied. This officer would go away again soon; meantime he thought no more about Bess. When the Lieutenant was gone, his own chance would come. For my own part, I sincerely wish that things had been exactly as Aaron wished them to be—namely, that Jack had quite forgotten the girl, and that he had fallen in love with Castilla or someone else, and that Bess—weary of much importunity or softened in heart—had accepted the hand of this great burly fellow, who loved her so constantly. Whereas—but you shall see.

It happened, however, one evening about eight o'clock, when Jack had been at home some three weeks, that Aaron, sitting alone in his house, which stood on one side of his boat-building yard, overlooking the river between the Upper and the Lower Water Gate, heard footsteps in his yard without. He rose, and opening the door called to know who was there at that time, and bade the visitor come to the house without more ado.

His visitor proved to be the man Hadlow.

'What the devil do you want?' asked Aaron. Mr. Brinjes himself was a man to be treated with the greatest respect, but his assistant, who was not credited with any magical powers, and could certainly not command rheumatics or give any more pain than is caused by the drawing of a tooth, was regarded with the contempt which attaches to the trade of mixing nauseous medicines. 'What do you want here, at this time? I have not sent for any of your bottles, and I don't want any of your leeches.'

'I humbly ask your pardon, Mr. Fletcher. I have brought no bottles and no leeches.'

'Then what are you come for?'

'I humbly ask your pardon, again, Mr. Fletcher, seeing that I am but a poor well-wisher and admirer——'

Here Aaron discharged a volley of curses at the man, which made his knees to tremble.

'I have come, Mr. Fletcher, desiring to do my duty, though but a poor apothecary's assistant, who may one day become an apothecary myself; when, Sir, if a tooth wants to be drawn, or a fever to be reduced, or a rheumatism——'

Here Mr. Fletcher gave renewed proof of impatience.

'Then, Sir, I have come to tell you a thing which you ought to know.'

'Say it out then, man.'

'First, I am afraid of angering you.'

Mr. Fletcher turned and went back into his room, whence he emerged bearing a thick rope's-end about two and a half feet long. This, in the hands of so big and powerful a

man as Aaron Fletcher, is a fearful weapon. He used it for the correction of his 'prentices; and it was very well known that there was nowhere a workshop where the 'prentices were better behaved or more industrious. Such was the wholesome terror caused by the brandishing of a rope's-end in the hands of this giant.

'Hark ye, mate,' he said, balancing this instrument, so that the assistant turned pale with terror, and his eyes rolled about all ways at once, 'you have angered me already, and, if you anger me more, you shall taste the rope's-end. Wherefore, lose no more time.'

'It is about Bess Westmoreland. Oh, Mr. Fletcher!' for the boat-builder raised his arm. 'Patience! Hear me out!' The arm went down. 'It is about Bess Westmoreland. Everybody knows that you have'—here the arm went up again. 'And it is about Lieutenant Easterbrook. Bess and the Lieutenant—oh, sir! have patience till you hear what I have to tell you!'

'My patience will not last much longer.

Death and the Devil, man! what do you mean by talking about Bess Westmoreland and Lieutenant Easterbrook? He has seen her but once since his return.'

'By your leave, sir, he sees her every day.'

Aaron threw the rope's-end from him with an oath. Then he caught the man by the coat-collar, and dragged him into the room.

'Come in here,' he said. 'By the Lord, if you are fooling me I will murder you!'

'If that is all,' the man replied, 'I have no fear. I am not fooling you, Mr. Fletcher; I am telling you the sober truth.'

'Man, I know how the Lieutenant spends his time. He is all the morning in the Yard, looking at the ships and talking to the officers. In the afternoon he sits with Mr. Brinjes, and in the evening he drinks at the tavern. And as for the girl, she never sees him.'

'You are wrong, sir. But oh! Mr. Fletcher, don't tell anyone I told you! The Lieutenant is the strongest man in the town—next to you, Sir—next to you—and the master can do dreadful things, if he chooses; and Bess herself

in a rage—have you ever seen Bess in a rage? —oh, Sir, first promise me not to tell who gave you the intelligence.'

'Do you want a bribe?'

'No; I want no bribe. I hate 'em—I hate 'em. And the one I hate most is the Lieutenant, because if I was nothing better than the dust beneath his feet, he couldn't treat me with more contempt.'

'Go on, man. Tell me what you have to say and begone.'

'He goes every afternoon to Mr. Brinjes.'

'I know that.'

'You think he goes to talk to the old man, I suppose? He does not, then. My master sleeps all the afternoon. If he didn't sleep, he would die. He says so. The Lieutenant goes there to make love to Bess.'

Aaron turned pale.

'She comes in every day by the garden gate and the back door, so that no one should suspect. And no one knows except me. But I know; I have looked through the key-hole. Besides, I hear them talking. Every day she

comes, every day they sit together, he with his arm round her waist, or round her neck playing with her hair, and she with her head upon his shoulder—kissing each other, and making love, while the master is sound asleep by the fire.'

'Go on.'

'When the master wakes up he laughs, and he says, "Kiss her again, Jack." Then he laughs again, and he wishes he was young again.'

'Is that all?'

'That is all. For the Lord's sake, Mr. Fletcher, don't let anyone know who told you! Mr. Brinjes would kill me, I think; and mind you, Mr. Fletcher, whatever you do, remember that the master is able to kill you, and will too, if you harm the Lieutenant. He knows how to kill people by slow torture. There's a man in the town now, covered with boils and blains from head to foot, says it's the Apothecary hath bewitched him. Don't offend Mr. Brinjes, Sir.'

'My lad,' said Aaron grimly, 'I doubt whether I ought not to take the rope's-end to your back for interfering with me and my

concerns. Now, if you so much as dare to talk to any man in this place about what you have seen and told me—whatever happens afterwards—remember, whatever happens afterwards—it is not a rope's-end that I shall take to you, but a cudgel; and I shall not beat you black and blue, but I shall break every bone in your measly skin. Get out, ye miserable, sneakin', creepin' devil!'

That was all the thanks that the poor wretch Hadlow ever got for the mischief he had made; but the thought that he had made mischief consoled him. Something was now going to happen. So he went his way, contented with his evening's work.

Then Aaron sat down, and began to think what he should best do. He had been full of Christian charity towards the man who was not, after all, as he feared, his rival; there would be no more talk of quarrelling and fighting between them; the shilling need not be fought for; the Lieutenant belonged to a different rank; in course of time Bess would tire of her resistance, and would yield. Now all was

altered again. His old rival was still a rival, and there must be fighting.

Presently he rose, and walked up the street to the Penman's house.

Mr. Westmoreland was at the tavern with his friends the Assistant Shipwright, the Sexton, and the Barber. Bess was sitting alone, with a candle and her work.

'Bess,' said Aaron, 'I want to have a serious talk with you; may I come in?'

'No, Aaron. Stand in the doorway, and talk there. I am not going to let anybody say that I let you into the house when father was out of it; but, if you want to talk foolishness, you can go away at once. It is high time to have done with foolishness.'

Aaron obeyed—that is to say, he remained standing at the open door, and he said what he had to say.

'It is for your own good, Bess; though you won't believe that anything I say is for your own good.'

'What is it, then?'

'It is this. Every afternoon you go to

Mr. Brinjes' parlour to meet Lieutenant Easterbrook. You go out by your garden gate, so that no one may see or suspect, and the Lieutenant goes in by the shop. In the parlour, while the old man is asleep, you kiss each other and make love.'

She sprang to her feet.

'Aaron, you are a spy!'

'I have been told this, but I did not spy it out for myself. Very well then, spy or not, think, Bess. The Lieutenant has never yet got appointed to a ship; perhaps he never will; he has got no money; he cannot marry you if he would; if he were to marry you the Admiral would never forgive him; if he doesn't want to marry you—why—there—Bess.'

'Is that all you have to say?' she asked, trying not to lose her temper, because she had the sense to perceive that it would please her lover if she quarrelled about him with this man. 'Is that all, Aaron?'

'Why, I might say it a thousand times over; but it wouldn't amount to much more than this. He can't marry you if he wants to;

and if he doesn't want to, a girl of your spirit ought to be too proud to listen to his talk.'

'Aaron, you shall pay for this,' cried Bess, with flaming eyes.

'You a lady, Bess? You to marry a King's officer? Know your own station, my girl. You are the daughter of the Penman, and you can neither read nor write. But there's a chance yet: send him packing first, and then you shall see.'

'Aaron, you shall pay,' she repeated; 'you shall pay.'

'I say, Bess, I will give you another chance. Before your name gets dragged in the mud and you become the town talk, send him packing, and you shall have me if you please. Bess, I love you better than the Lieutenant, for all he wears silk stockings. I love you in spite of yourself, Bess. You've been a fool, but you've been carried away by your woman's vanity, and there's not much harm done yet. Give him up, Bess, and you shall find me loving and true.'

In his emotion his voice grew hoarse and

thick. But he meant what he said, and it would have been better if Bess had taken him at his word on the spot. But she did not. She was carried away by her wrath, but yet so governed that she knew what she was saying.

'It is six years,' she said, 'since I looked on while you fought him and were beaten. I liked nothing better than to see you defeated and Jack victorious. Because, even then, you pretended to have some claim upon me, though I was but a little girl. Now, Aaron, I should like nothing better than to see Jack beat and bang you again until you cried for mercy.' Her eyes were flashing and her cheek red, and she stamped her foot upon the ground. 'Oh, I should like nothing better!'

'Should you, Bess, should you?' he replied, strangely, not in a rage at all, but with a great resolution.

'To see you lying at his feet. You, his rival!—you! Why, you may be bigger—so is a collier bigger than a little sloop. That is a great matter, truly! You his rival! To think that any woman whom he has once kissed

should ever be able so much as to look at you —oh! Aaron! But you don't know; you are too common and ignorant to know the difference there is between you.'

'You would like to see him beat and bang me, would you, Bess? Why, then, it is as easy as breaking eggs. You shall have the chance. All you have to do is to tell your fine lover that, as regards that shilling—he will know what shilling I mean—I am waiting and ready to have that repaid, or to take it out in another way—he will know the way I mean. And then, my girl, if you like to be present, you can. But I promise you the beating and the banging will be all the other way, and your fine lover, gentleman and King's officer though he is, shall be on his knees before he finds time to swing his staff. You tell him that about the shilling. If you will not, I will send a message by another.'

'I will tell him. Now go away, Aaron, lest you say something which would anger me still more.'

So he went away. But Bess told her lover,

who laughed, and said that Aaron was a greedy fellow whom there was no satisfying, but he should do his best to let him have a good shilling's-worth, and the full value of his money.

CHAPTER XV.

HORN FAIR.

THIS conversation happened in the second week of October. The opportunity of repaying the shilling occurred on the 18th of that month, which is St. Luke's Day, and consequently the first day of Horn Fair.

All the world has heard of this fair. It is not so famous a fair as that of St. Bartholomew's, the humours of which have been set forth by the great Ben Jonson himself; it has never, like that fair, been honoured by the presence of the Prince of Wales; nor has so ingenious a gentleman as Mr. Harry Fielding ever written plays to be acted at Horn Fair, as he hath done for Bartholomew. Nor is it as good for trade as the ancient Stourbridge Fair.

Yet for noise, ribaldry, riot, and drunkenness it may be compared with any fair held in the three kingdoms, even with the old May Fair, now suppressed, which they say was the abode of all the devils while it lasted. As for trade, there is never anything sold there—neither horses, nor cattle, nor cloth, nor any pretence made of selling anything, except horns and things made of horn, with booths for children's toys, penny whistles, and the like, gingerbread, cockles, oysters, and so forth, together with strong drink, and that the worst that can be procured of every kind.

It is frequented by a motley crew, consisting of a noisy London rabble: rope-makers from St. George's, Ratcliffe Highway; sail-makers from Limehouse, shipwrights from Rotherhithe, sailors from Wapping, all the City 'prentices who can get holiday, the shabby gentry of the King's Bench rules, together with a sprinkling of beaux and gallants who come here to riot. Hither flock also a great concourse of men and women from the country, who come in their smock-frocks and new white

caps, to drink, dance, look on and gape, bawl, laugh, and play upon each other those rough jokes which commonly lead to a fight. There is not, in fact, anywhere in the world a fair which hath a more evil reputation than Horn Fair. Yet I dare affirm that you shall not find a single London citizen who hath not paid one visit at least to Horn Fair; while there are many London dames—ay, of the finest—who have been tempted by the curiosity of their sex, and, in order to see the humours of famous Horn Fair, have dared the dangers of a rabble seeking enjoyment after their kind, and in the manner which best pleases their brutish nature.

Yet it was in such a place as this, and among such people, that the Lieutenant was called upon by Aaron to redeem his promise and to fight him for the shilling; and, although he might very well have refused to answer the challenge in such a place, Jack thought it incumbent upon his honour to fight, even though it should be like a Roman gladiator in the arena. Had he been invited to take a glass in a booth at the fair, or to eat hot cockles with

bumpkins, he would have treated the proposition with scorn; but because he was asked to fight, his honour, forsooth! was concerned, and he must needs go—so sacred a thing is the law of honour concerning the duello. No doubt in this case his delicate sense of honour and his inclination jumped, as they say, and he was by no means displeased to try his courage, strength, and skill against so doughty a champion as Aaron Fletcher. Yet I do not think there was another officer in the King's Navy who would have done what he did.

All sorts of ridiculous stories are told of Horn Fair and its origin, with a foolish legend about King John, which I pass over as unworthy of credence, because every painter who hath studied Italian and ecclesiastical art, and the symbolical figures with which saints are represented, knows very well that Luke, the Evangelist, was always figured in the pictures having with him the horned head of an ox, for which reason, and no other, the Charlton Fair was called Horn Fair, being held on St. Luke's Day. It is a pity that the mob cannot be

taught this—though, for my own part, I know not why an ox should go with the head of St. Luke—and so be persuaded to carry their horns soberly, in memory of the Saint who wrote the third Gospel.

The visitors, if the day is fine, begin to come down the river as early as eight in the morning, and for the most part they remain where they land, at Cuckold's Point, Redriff, eating and drinking until the procession is formed, which starts at eleven or thereabouts, and by that time there is a vast crowd, indeed, gathered together about the stairs, and the river is crowded with boats carrying visitors from London Bridge, or even from Chelsea. As for the quarrels of watermen and the splashing of the passengers and the exchange of scurrilous jokes, abuse, and foul language, it passes belief. However, the passengers mostly get safe to the stairs at last, and, after a quarrel with the waterman over the fare, they are permitted to land. Those who join in the procession array themselves in strange garments: some are dressed like wolves, some like bears,

some like lions, some again like wild savages, and some like Frenchmen, Spaniards, Russians, or the lusty Turk, and some wear fearful masks; but all are alike in this respect, that they wear horns tied upon their heads in various fashions. The women among them, however, who ought rather to be at home, do not wear horns upon their heads, but masks and dominoes. Those who can afford it have ribbons round their hats, the streaming of which in the breeze greatly gratifies them; some carry flags and banners, all together shout and bellow continually, and the procession is followed by all the boys, to judge from their number, who can be found between Westminster on the west and Woolwich on the east.

This magnificent procession, which is almost as good as the Lord Mayor's Show, leaves Rotherhithe, headed by drum and fife, at eleven in the forenoon, and marches through Deptford, across the bridge by way of the London Road, through Greenwich to Charlton Common.

Jack stood with me at the gate of the

Admiral's house, looking on as these Tom Fools passed, playing their antics as they went along. It seemed to me strange that a man of his rank should take any pleasure in witnessing the humours of the mob; but I thought as a fool, because there is something in every sailor, whether he be an officer or not, which makes him delight in singing and dancing, and causes his ears to prick up at the sound of a fiddle or a fife. Besides, as regards this sailor, it was six years and more since he had seen any merry-making at all, unless, which I know not, the half-starved Indians who entertained him had any songs and dances of their own.

'I must go to the fair this afternoon, Luke,' he said; 'will you come with me, lad?'

'What will you do at the fair, Jack? It is a rude, rough place, not fit for a gentleman.'

'Do you remember the last time we went? It is seven years ago. Ever since I came home I have felt constrained to visit again the places where we used to play. There is the crazy old summer-house in the gardens. I have been

there again. The place is not yet fallen into the Creek, though it is more crazy than ever.'

'And Mr. Brinjes' parlour? Have you been there?'

'I have been there,' he replied, with hesitation, 'once or twice—to look at his charts. His treasure is on an island in the North Pacific, whither our ship did not sail. Yes. I have been there—to see his charts, in the evening. In the afternoon, I find, he sleeps, and must not be disturbed.'

'And now, you must needs visit Horn Fair again. Well, Jack, I am a man of peace, and, very like, there may be a fight. So take with you a stout cudgel.'

'There is another reason also for my going,' he said. 'It is because Aaron Fletcher will play all-comers at quarterstaff.'

'Why, Jack, surely you would not play with Aaron before all this mob of rustics and common men?'

'I must, brave boy. For, look you, Aaron saved my life. There is no question about that. The boat must have gone down in half

an hour, and I with it, if he had not lugged me out. Therefore, if he asks me to do so small a thing as to fight him, the least I can do is to gratify him, and to fight him at such place, and in such manner, as he may appoint. I promised him this, and now he sends me word to remind me of my promise.'

'But the man is a giant, Jack.'

'He is a strapping fellow. But, if he is six foot four, I am six foot one and a half. His reach is longer than mine, it is true. But do not be afraid. I have got back my strength, and I think I shall give a good account of him. However, my word is passed to fight him when he wishes; and, whatever happens, I must go. He thinks to defeat me before all his friends. He is a braggart fellow, and we shall see, my lad.'

We walked over to Charlton after dinner; Jack in his Lieutenant's uniform, with new laced ruffles and laced shirt and cravat, very noble. He carried his sword, but, following my advice, he provided himself as well with a stout cudgel, in which, I confess, I placed more confidence

than in his sword. For why? A man thinks twice about using a sword upon a mob as he would upon an enemy, but an oaken cudgel does not generally kill, though it may stun. Therefore, he lays about him lustily if he have a cudgel, and spares not.

There was no hurry about the quarterstaff play, which would not begin until three o'clock, and we strolled about the fair among the crowd, looking at the shows, of which there were many more than I expected to find. But Horn Fair is happily placed in the almanack, so that the people who live by shows, rope-dancing, and the like, can go from Stepney Fair to Charlton, and so from Charlton to Croydon Fair. There was, to begin with, a most amazing noise, with beating of drums, blowing of trumpets, banging of cymbals, ringing of bells, dashing of great hammers upon the boards, whistling, marrow bones and cleavers, each one thinking that the more noise he made the more attractive would be his show. The booths were filled with common things, but these gilded, tied with bright ribbons and gay-coloured paper, so as to

look valuable, and with wheedling girls, in tawdry finery, to sell them. And here I found that my companion speedily forgot the dignity of an officer and became like a boy, buying things he did not want, because some black-eyed gipsy girl pressed them into his hand with a 'Sure your Honour will never regret the trifle for a fairing for your Honour's sweetheart. A proud and happy girl she is this day, to have her Captain home again.' And so on, he laughing and pulling out a handful of silver and letting her take as much as she pleased, whether for shoes, patterns, leather breeches, gingerbread, cheap books, or toys in horn, whatever she pleased to sell him. Jack bought enough of everything to stock a Foundling Hospital, but mostly left his purchases on the stalls where he found them, or gave them to the first pretty girl he met in the crowd. There certainly is something in the air of the sea which keeps in a man for a long time the eagerness of a boy. A London-bred young man of three-and-twenty, which was Jack's age, is already long past the enjoyment of things so simple as the amuse-

ments of a fair; he despises the shows, gauds, and antics which make the rustics and the mechanics gape and laugh. As for Jack, he must needs go everywhere and see everything; and this year there were a wonderful number of shows.

There was, for instance, the young woman of nineteen, already seven feet ten inches high, and said to be still growing, so that her well-wishers confidently expected that when she should attain her twenty-fifth year, she would reach the stature of nine feet, or, perhaps, ten. We also saw the bearded woman. This *lusus naturæ*, or sport of nature, presented for our admiration a large full beard, a foot long and more, growing upon the whole of her face, cheeks, chin and lip, so that her mouth was quite hidden by it. She was, by this time, unfortunately, fully fifty years of age, and her beard well grizzled, so that we had no opportunity of knowing how a woman in her youth and beauty would look with such an ornament to her face. It would then, I suppose, be soft and silky, and brown in colour. But perhaps

she would look not otherwise than a comely young man. This woman was a great strong creature, who might have felled an ox with her fist; she had a deep voice and a merry laugh, and made no opposition when Jack offered her a cheerful glass. We saw the Irish giant, also, who was a mighty tall fellow, but weak in the knees; and the strong woman who tossed about the heavy weights as if they had been made of pasteboard, and lifted great stones with her hair. And, since where there are giants there must also be dwarfs, we saw the Italian Fairy, a girl of sixteen, no taller than eighteen inches, and said to be a princess in her own country. It has been remarked by the curious that whereas giants have always something in their carriage and demeanour as if they were ashamed of themselves, so dwarfs, on the other hand, are the most vainglorious and self-conceited persons imaginable. This little creature, for instance, dressed in a flowered petticoat and a frock of sarcenet, walked about her stage, carried herself and spoke with all the airs of a Court lady or a

fine city madam, though where she learned these arts I know not. As for other shows, there was a menagerie wherein were exhibited a cassowary, a civet cat, a leopard, and a double cow—a cow, that is, with one head and two fore legs, but four hind legs. There was a theatre, where they performed the 'Siege of Troy' in a very bold and moving manner, and with much shouting and clashing of swords, though the performance was hurried, on account of the impatience of those without. There were lotteries in plenty, where one raffled for spoons of silver and rings of gold; but as for us, though we essayed our fortune everywhere, we got nothing. There was a fire-eater, who vomited flames, and put red-hot coals into his mouth; there was excellent dancing on the slack-rope, which is always to me the most wonderful thing in the world to witness; there was a woman who danced with four naked swords in her hands, tossing and catching them, presenting them to her breast, and all with so much fire and fury that it seemed as if she was resolved and determined to kill herself. Jack

rewarded her after the dance with a crown and a kiss, both of which she received with modesty and gratitude. There was also a ladder-dance, in which a young man got upon a ladder and made it walk about, and climbed up to the top of it and over it, and sat upon the topmost rung, and yet never let it fall—a very dexterous fellow.

'Why,' said Jack, presently, 'what have you and I learned, Luke, that can compare with the things which these people can do? Grant that I know the name and place of every bit of gear in a ship, and that you can paint a boat to the life; what is that compared with dancing on the slack-rope, or balancing a ladder as this fellow does it?'

At the time I confess I was, like Jack, somewhat carried away by the sight of so much dexterity, and began to think that perhaps showmen, mountebanks, and jugglers have more reason for pride than any other class of mankind. Afterwards I reflected that the wisdom of our ancestors has always held in contempt the occupations of buffoon and

juggler, so that, though we may acknowledge and even praise their dexterity, we are not called upon to envy or admire them.

Outside the booths, and apart from the theatres and shows, there was a stage, on which, at first sight, one only discerned a fiddler, a fifer, a drummer, and a fellow dressed in yellow and black, with a long tin trumpet. This was the stage of the great High German Doctor; his name I have forgotten, but it was a very high and noble sounding one. There were tables on the stage, and beside the musicians were the Doctor's zanies, who tumbled and postured, and danced the tight-rope; and his shell-grinders and compounders, every one of whom in turn harangued and bamboozled the mob. As for the Doctor himself, he was not at first on the stage at all: but presently the man with the tin trumpet blew a horrid blast, and bawled out, 'Room for the Doctor, Gentlemen! Room for the Doctor!' and the people parted right and left, while, mounted on a black steed, that learned person rode very slowly towards the stage.

The saddle was covered with red velvet; it was provided with a kind of lectern, on which was a big folio volume, which the Doctor was reading, paying no heed to the crowd, as if no moment could be spared from study. A fellow dressed in crimson led the horse. The Doctor was a tall and stout man, with an extraordinary dignity of carriage, and solemn countenance, dressed in a gown of black velvet and a crimson velvet cap, like unto the cap of a Cambridge *Medicinæ Doctor*. Then the man with the tin trumpet hung out a placard upon the stage, on which was the great man's style and titles, and these he bellowed forth, for the information of those who could not read. We learned, partly from the placard, and partly from this fellow, that the great man was Physician to the Sophy of Persia, and to the Great Mogul, tooth-drawer to the King of Morocco, and corn-cutter to the Emperor of Trebizonde, the Grand Turk, and Prester John; that he was the seventh son of a seventh son; that it was seven days before he sucked, seven months before he cried, and seven years before

he uttered a single word—so long was this wonderful genius in preparing for his duties. As for his medical studies, we were told that they had occupied his attention for five times seven years, in the cities of London, Leyden, Ispahan, Trebizonde, and Constantinople; and that he was at that moment twelve times seven years of age, without a grey hair or a missing tooth, and with children not yet three years old, so efficacious were his own medicines as proved upon himself, while his servants never knew an illness or even an ailment (the drummer, I observed, had his face tied up for toothache). When this fellow had done, the music began, and the zanies tumbled over each other, and turned somersaults, while the mixers of the medicines bawled out jokes and made pretence to swallow their pills. Finally, the Doctor himself stood before us, and made his oration.

'Gentlemen all,' he said, 'I congratulate you on your good fortune in coming to Horn Fair this day, for it is my birthday; and on this anniversary I give away my priceless medicines

for no greater charge than will pay for the bottles and boxes in which they are bestowed. On all other days they are sold for their weight in gold. I have here'—he held up a plaister—'the Cataplasma Diabolicum, or Vulnerary Decoction of Monkshood, which heals all wounds in twenty-four hours if applied alone; if taken with the Electuary Pacific—show the Electuary, varlets!—it heals in a couple of hours. I have the Detersive, Renefying, and Defecating Ophthalmic, which will cure cataracts and blindness, and will cast off scales as big as barnacles in less than a minute. I have, for earache, toothache, faceache, and tic, a truly wonderful vegetable, an infusion of peony, black hellebore, London pride, and lily root. Here is a bottle of Orvietans, for the expulsion of poison, price one shilling only. Here is the Balsamum Arthriticum; here the Elixir Cephalicum, Asthmaticum, Nephriticum et Catharticum. Gentlemen, there is no disease under the sun'—here the trumpeter blew the tin trumpet—'but I can cure it. Rheumatics'—bang went the drum—'Asthma'—bang went the drum be-

tween every word—'Gout—Sciatica—Lumbago—Pleurisy—Melancholy: in a word, there is nothing that I cannot cure at a quarter the cost of your town doctors. No more disease, Gentlemen, no more pain; step up and try the Cataplasma Diabolicum, the Electuary Pacific, the Detersive Ophthalmic, and the Vegetable Infusion. Step up and buy the medicines that will make and keep you in hearty good health so that you shall live to a hundred and fifty—ay, even, with care, to two hundred and fifty—knowing neither age, sickness, nor decay.'

The people laughed incredulously, and yet believed every word, which I suppose will always be the case with the mob, and began to push and shove each other in their eagerness to buy the wonderful medicines. For his part, Jack listened open-mouthed.

'Why,' he said, 'what fools we are, Luke, to let this foreign fellow go, who hath so many secrets? Why do not we keep him and get his secrets out of him, and so let there be no more sick lists to be kept?'

Then he would have gone on the stage and

bought everything the Doctor had to sell, but I dissuaded him, pointing out that the fellow was only an impudent impostor.

And before every show were ballad-singers bawling their songs. Their principal business at fairs is not, I am told, to sell their ballads so much as to attract a crowd and engage their attention while the scoundrel pickpockets go about their business unwatched (one was caught in the fair while we were there, and, for want of a pump, was put head first into a tub of cold water, and kept there till he was well-nigh drowned); and everywhere there were men who grinned and postured, girls who danced, boys who walked on stilts, gipsies who told fortunes, women bawling brandy-balls and hot furmety; there was the hobby-horse man, with his trumpet and his 'Troop, every one, one, one!' and a hundred more, too numerous to mention. And for food, they had booths where they sold hot roast pork, with bread and onions and black porter, a banquet to which the gentry at the fair, whose stomachs are not queasy, did infinite justice.

We saw so many shows and booths, and Jack appeared so contented and happy in looking at them, that I confess I was in hopes he would forget his promise to fight Aaron, the prospect of which, in this fair, crowded with the rudest and roughest men, pleased me less every moment. But, if you please, his honour was concerned. Therefore, when the hour approached he remembered it—to be sure, one might be expected to remember a promise to meet and to fight so big a man as Aaron Fletcher—and he cast about in order to find the amphitheatre or booth where the duello was to be held. We presently found it, on the skirts of the fair, and a little retired from the noise. It proved to be nothing more than a square inclosure of canvas, fastened to upright poles, with no roof. Those who came to see the sport paid an admission fee of one penny. Within the booth there were rough benches set along the sides, and in the middle a broad stage two feet high. There was music playing as we went in, and on the stage a little girl of ten dancing very prettily and merrily. The

place was filled: I knew many of the faces: those, namely, of the Deptford men, come to stand by their champion. It appeared as if they knew what was going to take place, for at the sight of the Lieutenant there were passed round looks and nods and every indication of heartfelt joy. Drawers ran about with tankards and mugs of ale, and most of the men were accommodated with pipes of tobacco. There were also some women present, and of what kind may be easily imagined. Sufficient to say that they were fit companions of the men. The people did not greatly care for the dance, which was too simple and innocent for them. When the little girl finished and jumped down from the stage, there came forward a scaramouch dressed in the Italian fashion, who played a hundred tricks, posturing and twirling his legs about as if they had been without bones or joints. But the people were impatient, and bawled for him to have done. Wherefore, he, too, retired, and then they roared for Aaron Fletcher, the Deptford men being foremost in their desire for his

appearance. He leaped upon the stage, therefore, quarterstaff in hand, stripped to his shirt, and twirling his weapon over his head as if it had been a little walking-cane. Then the place became hushed, as happens when there is going

to be a fight of any kind, because fighting goes to the heart of every man, and makes him serious and anxious at the beginning, but full of fury as the fight goes on. Aaron was a

terrible great fellow to look at, thus stripped of his coat and standing on the stage before us all.

'I challenge the best man among ye,' he said, looking at the Lieutenant, 'gentleman or clown, King's officer or able seaman, for a guinea or a groat, as ye please.'

Then he twirled his staff again, and walked round the stage, like a gamecock before the battle.

'Shall I give him a chance with the meaner kind first, to show his mettle and to breathe him?' said Jack. ''Twould be charitable.'

There sprang upon the stage, from the crowd, a stout and lusty youth, not so tall as Aaron, but of good length of limb and resolute face. 'Twas the champion of Eltham, as we learned from the crowd. He was clad in a smock-frock, which he laid aside.

'I will play a bout for a crown,' he said, lugging out the money, while his friends shouted.

Then they began; but, Lord! the countryman was no match for the Deptford player, and

the shouting of our townsmen was loud to see the play that Aaron made, and the dexterity with which his staff, as quick as lightning, played on his adversary's head and ribs, his legs and arms. So that very soon, throwing down his staff, the fellow leaped from the stage, and would have no more.

'It was pretty,' said Jack. 'The rustic hath had his lesson.'

Then another: this time one who had played and won at Bartholomew Fair, and now advanced with confidence, trusting to his activity and the rapidity of his attack, which were, indeed, astonishing. But, alas! his leaps and bounds were of little avail against the long reach and the heavy hand of the giant; and he fell, to rise no more.

Then the mob roared and shouted again.

'This fellow is soon satisfied,' said Jack. 'It is my turn now.'

He laughed, and took off coat, waistcoat, and hat; giving them to me for safety. Thus reduced to his shirt, he stepped forward and mounted the stage, the crowd being overjoyed

and beyond themselves in the anticipation of a fight between their champion and a gentleman in laced ruffles, white silk stockings, and powdered hair. Certainly, nothing so good as this had ever before been seen at the fair.

Then I became aware of a strange thing. There stood within the door—not sitting down, but standing—just within the folds of the canvas, no other than Bess Westmoreland and her father. Who would have thought to see the Penman at Horn Fair? Nothing could be more out of place than this pair among the waterside men and the ruffians in the booth. Bess stood upright, holding her father's hand, not for her own protection but to assure him of his safety, while he, stooping and round-shouldered, looked about him as if fearing violence of some kind. I now perceived that Bess was come for no other purpose than to see this fight—to be sure, it was arranged beforehand, and there was no reason why she should not hear of it from Aaron; but I had not thought Bess would have come to such a place to see such a sight. I declare I had not the least suspicion of the

truth, so carefully had the lovers kept their secret. Bess took no notice at all of the rabble, her eyes fixed upon the stage as if the people were not even present; no great lady waiting at the door of the theatre for her chair could look more proudly upon the common herd—the link-boys, chairmen, and lookers-on—as if they were beneath her notice. Her lips were set, and her brow contracted, and her cheek was pale; but I knew not the cause, unless it were from terror at the approaching battle. Yet why did she come to see it?

She came, as I learned soon afterwards, confident in her lover's triumph, and anxious to increase the discomfiture of his adversary, and her rejected suitor. Since that day I have ceased to wonder why the Roman ladies and matrons took pleasure in witnessing the fights of gladiators, and why in the days of tournaments gentle ladies went to see their lovers tilt. The joy of battle, I am sure, is as great in the heart of woman as in that of man. Certainly, no one in the crowd watched the combat with more eagerness and interest than did Bess, whose

eyes flashed, lips parted, and bosom heaved with the passion of the fight. As for her father, in the hush before the battle began, I heard him exclaim, 'It is the Lieutenant and Aaron! Oh! dear! . . . dear! they will do each other some grievous harm. Bess, ask them to desist. Is it for this you brought me here, wilful girl? Grievous bodily hurt they will do to each other.'

No one paid any heed to that poor man. Even the drawers ceased to run about with tankards, and no man called for drink.

Jack took the quarterstaff, which had already been used twice ineffectually, poised it in his hands, and turned a smiling face to his adversary.

'I have kept my promise, Aaron,' he said; but this the mob did not hear. 'We will fight for that shilling. Bess is in the doorway, looking on. It seems as if we were fighting for more than a shilling, does it not?'

Aaron made no reply in words, but he laughed aloud. Perhaps he remembered how, seven years before, when last he fought with

Jack, Bess was looking on at his defeat. This time he was confident in his strength. She was come again, looking to see him worsted. She should be disappointed.

There was no lack of courage about the man. Courage he had, and plenty. He was a good three inches taller than his adversary, which at quarterstaff gives a great advantage; he was quick of eye and of fence; he was heavier and stronger; and his two first combats had scarcely breathed him. On the other hand, he was opposed to a man who for six years and more had led the hardest life possible, with no indulgences—wine, beer, tobacco, indolence, or anything to soften his muscles or dim the eye. Now Aaron, as everybody knew, was fond of a glass; and though no sot, once a week or so was drunk. And he had already begun to put on flesh. As they stood, face to face, one might have gone a hundred miles and never seen so fine a couple.

And then, at tap of drum, the fight began, and for awhile everybody was mute.

Jack, I perceived, was resolved at first to

stand on the defensive, for two reasons. First, because his enemy showed wrath in his scowling eyes, and therefore would, perhaps, spend his breath and strength in furious onslaught. Next, because, as he told me afterwards, it was not until he held the weapon in his hands that he remembered he had not played for four years and more. One would think he might have remembered so important a fact before. It is an admirable custom in some ships for the crew, both officers and men, to amuse themselves daily at quarterstaff, singlestick, and boxing; but Jack had been out of a ship for four years. Still, if his hand was a little out, his eye was true. Aaron's game was twofold. First, he would beat down and overpower his man by superior strength and advantage in reach; and secondly, by feints and leaps, shifting his ground, and changing the length of his weapon, by coming to close quarters and then retreating, to cheat his adversary's eye and disconcert him even for a single moment, when he would deal him a decisive stroke. This was a very good design, and hath often served.

But Jack was not to be so caught. No man at quarterstaff, however strong, can beat down an adversary who has learnt the art of parry, which is more than half the battle; no man, however quick and active, can disconcert an enemy who knows how to follow his eyes steadily. Jack, therefore, lost no ground and was never touched, so that, though he delivered no stroke, the ease with which he met Aaron's blows presently caused the spectators to roar with admiration. In all kinds of fighting there are two first principles, or rules, to be carefully learned. The first of these is never to lose sight of your enemy's eye, and the next is never to lose your temper. A third is to know how to strike when the occasion comes. If a man at this rough game chance to lose his temper, he loses the game. This is what Aaron did. It maddened him that he could not strike his enemy, and it maddened him still more to hear the roars of the people at the dexterity which defeated him. Moreover, he knew that Bess was looking on; therefore he became more furious, and delivered his blows more rapidly,

but with less precision. 'Don't fight wild, Aaron!' shouted his friends, but too late; while the fellows in the booth began to jeer and laugh at him, asking why he did not strike his man with a 'Now, Aaron! now's your turn! Hit him on the head! There's a brave stroke missed!' and so on, foreseeing that if the Lieutenant could only keep cool, and wait for his chance, the victory would be his.

Jack told me afterwards that, while they played, the old skill came back to him, and his confidence; so that he could afford to play with his man and bide his time, receiving all the blows, whether at full length, half length, or close quarters, with patience and good temper.

This strange duel, in which one man struck and the other only parried, lasted long: insomuch, that the spectators left off shouting, and looked on with open mouths. It lasted so long that Aaron was now raging and foaming, breathing heavily, and plunging as he struck with the staff. As for me, I wondered why Jack did not strike. He had his reason: he

wished to strike but once, and therefore he waited. At last the chance came. Aaron left his head exposed, and then, with a thud which might have been heard outside the booth, the Lieutenant's staff resounded on the side of his enemy's head, and Aaron fell prone upon the stage—senseless.

It is said that, when a gentleman fights a common fellow, the mob is always pleased that the gentleman shall be victorious. I know not if this be true, but I know that the fellows in the booth rose as one man, even the Deptford men, and cheered the victor to the sky.

Jack stepped from the stage, a little heated by the fight, and put on his coat, waistcoat, and hat.

'Aaron is a very pretty player,' he said, 'but he should not have challenged me until he was in better condition. There were half a dozen poor fellows aboard the "Countess of Dorset" who would have beaten him. Here, my lads'—he now became again an officer—'Aaron is a Deptford man, like me. Take

care of him, and spend this guinea in drinking the King's health.'

So the fellows tossed their greasy caps in the air, and the tapsters tied their apron-strings tighter, and began to run about with tankards and mugs while the guinea was drinking out, and Jack strode down the booth, the men making a lane for him, and crying, 'Huzza! for the noble Captain!' Meanwhile, no one took any notice of the fallen champion, who presently recovered some of his senses, and sat up, staring about him with distracted eyes.

'Why, Mr. Westmoreland,' said Jack, at the door, as if he had not seen him before, 'you at Horn Fair? I might as soon have expected to see you at Vauxhall.'

'Nay, sir, your Honour knows I value not such merriment. But Bess would bring me here. 'Tis a wilful girl. Nothing would serve her but she must see the humours of the fair. Girls still crave for mirth.'

'You ought to be at home among your books, Mr. Westmoreland. Go home. Luke

will walk with you, and I will take care of Bess—good care, good care—and bring her safe home, after she has seen the fair. Come, Bess, will you see the wild beasts, or the slack-rope dancers? Take him home, Luke; take him home.'

So saying, he seized Bess by the hand, and drew her away, leaving the old man, her father, with me. I observed that, though Bess cried 'Oh!' and 'Pray, Lieutenant,' and 'Don't, Lieutenant,' and 'Fie, Lieutenant,' she laughed, and took his hand without any reluctance, but rather a visible satisfaction, because she had certainly got the properest man in all the fair.

'The Lieutenant,' said Mr. Westmoreland, 'is strong enough to protect any girl—though, as for Bess, Mr. Luke, she is strong enough to protect herself. Nevertheless'—he broke off and sighed—'nevertheless, a motherless girl is a great charge for a peaceful man, especially when she is strong and determined, like my Bess. What am I to do, sir? I cannot whip and flog her; I cannot lay my commands upon

her if she doth not choose to obey me. I cannot make her marry if she still says nay. And the men, they are afraid of her pride and wilfulness. Such a headstrong girl will never make an obedient wife.'

'It is a situation, Mr. Westmoreland,' I said, 'full of danger.'

'What is worse, Mr. Luke,' he went on, 'what is worse is that she scorns the man Aaron Fletcher himself—a substantial man, though they do say he knows the coast of France. Yet he would cheerfully take the risk of her masterful temper and her wilful ways, if she would but say him yea.'

'Why, Mr. Westmoreland, as for that, I am sure there are plenty of men ready to be fired by such charms as your daughter Bess possesses.'

He shook his head.

'Charms? I know not what they are. Black hair and black eyes may please some, but I know not whom. Let us go from this wicked and riotous place, Mr. Luke. Peaceful men have no place here. The Lieutenant will

bring her home; though, more likely than not, they will quarrel on the way, both of them being masterful, and Bess will have to find her way back without him. Yet she ought to be proud of the honour he hath done her, and perhaps she will be meek for once, and behave pretty.'

So we turned and made our way out of the throng, and so home.

'I am sorry,' said Mr. Westmoreland presently, 'I am very sorry that Mr. Easterbrook hath fought and vanquished Aaron Fletcher. I would rather have seen Aaron the conqueror.'

'Why?'

'Because Aaron is a cruel and a vindictive man. He was bragging among his friends of the sport they would witness at the fair, and he has been humiliated. Now he will have his revenge, if he can, for the disgrace put upon him in the presence of his friends; and Bess hath been at the fair with the Lieutenant, and I know not what will happen. He is a revengeful man, Mr. Luke; and, unhappily,

he is in love with Bess, and wants to marry her, a thing that, with my experience, I cannot understand. Well—it is a terrible thing, a terrible thing, for a peaceful man like me to have such a daughter. A humble man should pray for ugly daughters, who are also meek and obedient. They may wait for their beauty till they get to Heaven. I want nothing but peace, Mr. Luke, so that I may continue my studies in algebra and logarithms, for which end, and no other, unless it be the furtherance of goodly writing, I was sent into this troubled world.'

The next day I learned from Jack that he had taken Bess to every show at the fair; that he had given her as noble a supper as the place afforded; that he had fought and overthrown three fellows who waylaid them on the road home, and would have robbed him of his money as well as his fair charge; and that he safely convoyed her, about midnight, to her father's door. The Admiral heard of the evening's adventure, and laughed, saying that Bess was a lucky girl to get such a proper

fellow to show her the fair. But I do not think that either Jack or the Admiral related the story of the fight, and the subsequent doings, to Madame and Castilla.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE SUMMER-HOUSE.

I AM a dull person in suspecting or guessing at passages of love. Yet I had seen Bess dragging her father to Horn Fair in order to witness the fight, and I marked the flash of triumph in her eyes when Aaron fell, and the unconcealed pleasure with which she accompanied the victor.

On Sunday morning, a day or two after the fair, another thing happened which ought to have made me suspect. It was in church. Soon after the service of Morning Prayer began, I observed an unwonted agitation among the feminine part of the congregation, and presently discovered that the eyes of all were, with one consent, directed upon a certain seat in the north aisle, occupied by Bess

Westmoreland and her father. The reason of this phenomenon was that Bess had come to church attired in a very fine new frock made of nothing less than sarcenet, with a flowered petticoat, a lawn kerchief about her neck, and a hat trimmed with silk ribbons, so that among the women around her in their scarlet flannel, and the girls in their plain camblet, linsey-woolsey, and russet, she looked like a rose among the weeds of the hedge. Few of the gentlewomen in the church were more finely dressed. As to them, their eyes plainly said, if eyes can speak, 'Saw one ever such presumption?' And as for the baser sort, they first gazed with admiration and envy unspeakable, and then sniffed and tossed their heads, as if nothing would have induced them to put on such fine things: and then they looked at each other, each with the same question trembling on her tongue, each one longing to ask aloud, 'Who gave her the things?' For there is some strange quality in the female conscience (I mean only in a seaport town), which enables every girl to accept joyfully and gratefully

whatever a man may give her, and at the same time to flout and scorn all other girls for doing the same thing; so that what is a virtue in herself must be a clear sign of immodesty or forwardness in another.

One would not deny that the girl was worthy of blame; for, though there are no longer sumptuary laws, yet every woman knows how far she may in decency, and with due regard to her station, carry her love of finery. Bess, however, wore these things not of her own will, but by desire (say, rather, command) of a certain person. There is, again, nothing strange in a Deptford girl suddenly appearing in the colours of a rainbow, especially after a ship has been paid off, though very soon the silks and satins go to the Jews who buy secondhand clothes, together with the trinkets and the ribbons; and Madame returns to her russet frock, her blue apron, and her speckled handkerchief. But this, which is of daily occurrence among the common sailors' wives, one would not expect of a respectable girl, such as Bess. It is quite certain, and one must not

excuse her conduct, that she should not have ventured to church thus attired. Yet I, for one, was ready to forgive her, first because she looked so marvellously beautiful in these fine feathers, and next because she bravely bore the artillery of these eyes and held herself tall and upright, looking straight before her, as if no one was gazing at her, and as if she wore what belonged to her. Women are your true levellers: they have no respect for rank: even a Peer is but a man to them, and a Countess is but a woman; they are ready to measure their own beauty beside that of any lady in the land; there is no girl, however lowly, who would refuse, for conscience sake, the honourable attentions of a gentleman; and the silly creatures, I am told, whisper continually to each other tales of humble girls raised to the condition of Princesses.

There was another person in the church, besides myself, who seemed as if leniency and readiness to forgive this presumption possessed his heart as well. This was the Lieutenant, who, from his place in the Admiral's pew (the

corner nearest the reading-desk, with his back to the altar), regarded the girl steadfastly during the whole service, insomuch that I feared lest Madame or Castilla herself should observe it, and be offended at so indecent a proof of admiration in Divine service. But Castilla did not discover it, partly because she hath never been able to understand how a gentleman can regard a common girl with admiration (she still considers that Jack's passion for Bess was caused by the sorcery and craft of Mr. Brinjes), and, therefore, was not likely to suspect such a thing; and partly because Castilla's eyes in church were always fixed upon her book, as she followed the words of the service, or they were humbly dropped upon her lap during the sermon, as if she closely followed the argument, and was being convinced by my father's reasoning. Now, as hath been already explained, the Vicar's sermons were written for the perusal of scholars rather than for the understanding of the unlearned.

The service over, we walked out in due order, and so by the gate into Church Lane, as we had done on that day, three weeks before,

when our prodigal came home to us in rags. And then, after a little talk, we separated, Jack going with the Admiral's party, and I returning to the Vicarage to dinner.

After dinner, the afternoon being warm and sunny, I took my hat, and walked leisurely towards those gardens of which I have already spoken, where were the orchards of plum, pear, apple, and cherry, and where the old summer-house overlooked the Creek. It would be, I thought, pleasant in the gardens with no one but myself, and I could walk about among the trees, watching the grey lichen on the bark and the sober tints of the autumnal leaves, and perhaps find, in the view of the Greenwich Reach, something new to observe and note. One whose profession is to paint ships of all kinds can never grow weary of watching them, whether at anchor or in motion; just as one who paints figures loves to be for ever contemplating the human figure, whether in action or in repose.

The air was still and soft, the day warm, although it was already the twentieth day of

October. The fruit was all picked now, and the leaves beginning to dry at their stalks: because the leaves of apple, plum, and cherry do not turn brown, but drop off while they are yet green; yet the green is quite another hue than that presented in spring and summer, and I wonder that no painter has painted the greens of autumn, as well as the yellow, red, and brown. I have myself attempted a sketch, in April, showing parts of that long stretch of garden all the way from these gardens to Greenwich Hospital, which at that season look like a vast cloud of white and pink blossom resting on the green branches which here and there peep out.

This afternoon the tide was high. There was moored close to the mouth of the Creek, and on the opposite bank, a barge, which, with its brown sail lowered, its thick mast, and its hanging ropes, formed so pretty a set-off to the trees of the orchard beyond, that I stood awhile to gaze upon it. I have drawn many barges; below the bridge at Wapping Stairs, and in Chelsea Reach and in other places, but I never drew any prettier picture than that of the barge

in the Creek at high tide, the woods behind it: only, as artists can, I made a change. For I presently sketched the barge, and waited until the following spring, when I painted a background of apple and cherry orchards in blossom.

Well, when I had looked at my barge and made a note of it, and of one or two other things, being in a leisurely mood, and quite certain that I was alone in the garden, I lifted the latch of the summer-house door and walked in.

I declare that I suspected nothing. If I had known who were in the place I should have beat a drum, or blown a trumpet, or fired a cannon to announce my approach, sooner than steal thus unawares upon them. But I did nothing; and pushed the door open without ceremony. Heavens! There was Bess Westmoreland, her head upon Jack's shoulder, while his hand clasped her waist, and his lips kissed her cheek! Who would have suspected this? I was so surprised that I stood speechless, I dare say with mouth wide open, as one sees on

the stage, where gestures of all kinds are exaggerated. Yet not so amazed but I saw what a pretty picture they made, he in his blue coat and crimson sash, and his hat with the King's cockade: she in the pretty frock for which the women were now railing at her behind her back. A young man and a beautiful girl embracing cannot but make a pretty picture. As for this, I made a sketch in oils six months later. Bess stood to me for her portrait very willingly when I promised that the picture should be given to her sweetheart when he should return. As for the Lieutenant, I got a fellow, for a shilling or two, to stand in the attitude I wanted, while the face I drew from memory, with the assistance of Bess. I painted them in the summer-house, and through the window you can see a ship slowly going down the river. For a reason, which you will presently learn, I never gave that picture to Jack; and, for my own reason, I have not sold it, but keep it hung up at home in my studio, though Castilla loves it not, and will never, if she can help it, look upon it—

perhaps because the picture renders scant justice to the beauty of Bess, whose flushed cheeks, parted lips, and heaving bosom I endeavoured, but perhaps with insufficient success, to portray upon the canvas. Nor, I am aware, is justice done to the passion expressed in the lover's eyes, in his bending head—nay, even in the arms with which he held the nymph to his heart.

'Zounds!' cried Jack, as Bess screamed and started, and pushed him back, and sunk upon the bench, her face in her hands. 'Zounds and fury!' He stepped forward, his fists clenched, fire and distraction in his eyes. He was so carried away with his wrath that he did not at first even recognise me, and made as if he would draw his sword and make an end of me.

'Why, Jack,' I cried, 'I knew not thou wert here! How should I know?'

Upon this he let fly a round dozen or so of sailors' oaths, such as may be heard in Flagon Row or Anchorsmith Alley, sound and weighty oaths, every one more profane than its pre-

decessor. The language of the fo'ks'le is, we know, readily and greedily acquired by every officer, and is too often adopted as his own to the end of his days.

'I knew not, Jack, indeed,' I repeated, 'that anyone was here. What? Should I spy on your actions? As for what I have seen——'

'Let me go, Jack!' cried Bess; 'oh, let me go! He will tell my father, who will send me away for a servant. And perhaps he will tell Aaron, who would murder you, if he could, without being hanged! Oh, Jack! what shall I do?'

'I shall tell no one, Bess,' I said. 'Why, it is no business of mine to go repeating what I have seen accidentally. Am I the town barber?'

Jack looked doubtfully; then he laughed.

'Cheer up, Bess,' he said; 'no harm is done. Luke will never betray an old friend. He came here to draw the ships, which is all he thinks about. He will go away, and he will forget all about it.'

'Nay,' I said; 'I shall not forget. But I shall hold my tongue.'

'I won't trust no one—only you, Jack,' said the girl.

'Hark ye, Luke.' Jack drew her closer to himself, and laid his arm round her neck. 'Hark ye, lad. Thou hast discovered what was not meant for thee—nor for anyone—to know. That signifies nothing for a lad of honour. But for Bess's sake, swear it. Take an oath upon it.'

'I swear, Bess,' I declared to her, 'that I will speak no single word of what I have seen and learned. If there were a Bible here, I would kiss the book to please you. You may trust me, Bess.'

'You may, indeed, Bess,' said Jack. 'Hands upon it, lad.'

So we shook hands, and in all that followed afterwards I told nobody what had happened; and the thing was so managed that it was never suspected by anyone except Aaron. It seems wonderful that no one in Deptford found it out, because it is a place where one half the

women are continually employed in watching and spying upon the other half, and find their chief happiness in detecting things which it was desired to keep secret, forgetting that others are employed in exactly the same inquiry after their secrets. Just so one hath observed a row of monkeys in cages each thieving from one neighbour's dish, while the other steals from his.

'Trust all or none, Luke,' said Jack. 'Thou shalt know all, and be a witness between us. Listen. I have told Bess that I love her, and that when I come home again I will marry her. If I had not fallen in love with so much beauty and loveliness I should have been a most insensate wretch, unworthy to be called a man. Was there ever a more charming nymph?' He kissed her again, while her great eyes swam with the pleasure of so much praise. 'Thou shalt paint her for me, Luke. And as for Bess, she says that she loves me. I believe she lies, because how such a girl, so soft and tender, can love a rough sea-bear like me, who knows none of the ways to please a woman, passes

understanding. But she says she does, and I will question her farther upon this point when thy great ugly phiz is no more blocking up the gangway. And she will not believe that I am in earnest, Luke. That is my trouble with her. She will have that I shall go away and forget her, as many sailors do.'

'So he will,' said Bess. 'They all go away and forget the girls who loved them. And then I shall break my heart and die; if I don't, I shall hang myself.'

'So, Luke, listen and be a witness. What do I care who her father is? Such a girl deserves to be the daughter of a Commodore. Talk not to me of gentlewomen born. Where is there any woman, gentle or simple, with such eyes as Bess, such lips as Bess, such hair as Bess?' I declare he kept kissing her at each sentence, she making no manner of resistance. 'So I will swear to her, in thy presence, Luke, to make it more solemn, and to make her believe my word. I, Jack Easterbrook,' he took her hand at this point, as if he was actually marrying her in church,

and by the minister or priest. 'I, Jack Easterbrook, do solemnly promise and vow that I will never make love to any other woman and never marry any other woman than Bess Westmoreland; and that I will never think of any other woman at home or in foreign parts. First, I must get commissioned; and then, when the war is over, I will come back and marry my Bess. Kiss me again, girl. This is my solemn promise and oath, in which I will not fail, SO HELP ME, GOD!'

I have often, since that day, wondered at the amazing force of the passion which could make so young a man call down upon himself the awful vengeance of offended Omnipotence if he broke a vow of constancy towards a girl he had seen but twice or thrice; for I count as nothing the time when she was a child, and he came to her father for lessons.

As he spoke the last words, his eyes grew dim with tenderness, and he stooped and kissed the girl on her forehead, as if to seal and consecrate the vow. As for her, she was

transfigured. I could not believe that love could so powerfully change a woman's face. She had reason for triumph; but it was not triumph in her eyes; rather was it a kind of humble pride—a wondering joy that so gallant a man should love her, with a doubt whether it was not, after all, a passing fancy, and a fear that she should not fix his affections.

'Oh!' she sighed. 'Oh! Jack!' and could find no more words.

'Bess,' I said, 'vows ought not to be all on one side. If Jack promises so much, what hast thou to promise, in thy turn?'

'Tell me what to say. Oh! I am only a poor girl! What can I promise him? I am so ignorant that I do not know what to promise. Jack, do you want me to say that I will be faithful? No—you cannot. Why, is there any man in the world to compare with you? If a woman cannot be true and constant to you, she cannot be true to any man. As for the rest of them, I value not one of them a brass farthing. Oh!' she laughed and clasped her hands. 'Why, I am content to be his

slave, Luke—yes, his slave, to toil and work for him all day long—his slave—his servant.' She fell on her knees before him. 'Oh! Jack, command me what you please. I want nothing more than to obey your orders.'

Wonderful it was how love made this ignorant and wilful girl at once eloquent and humble. Jack lifted her up, and held her by both hands.

'You are a King's officer, Jack,' she went on, speaking rapidly; 'I must try so that you shall not be ashamed of your wife. I am but the daughter of a Penman, I know. He writes letters for sailors, and teaches mathematics to midshipmen and young sailor officers, if there are any. But I have time to learn, and I will find out how to bear myself like a gentlewoman, and to talk like one, and to dress myself as a gentleman's wife ought to dress herself. I will make my father teach me to read and to write, and as for manners—I will go to Mr. Brinjes. He will do anything in the world for you, Jack, and for the woman of your choice.'

One could not choose but laugh at thinking of Mr. Brinjes as a teacher of polite manners and conversation. He had learned the most approved fashion, no doubt, among the Mandingoes and the Coromantyns. Yet the earnest and serious manner in which the girl spoke, made the matter moving. However, enough was said, and I offered to go, but she caught me by the hand.

'Stay, Luke!' she whispered. 'Jack, some of you break your vows; but you will not, Jack—you will not? As for me, I need not promise: for I cannot choose but be true to mine.'

She laid her head upon his breast, and I left them, shutting the door behind me, and going very softly.

In the evening I saw Jack again.

'Luke,' he said, 'I am the happiest man in the world, because I have got the best girl in the world. What do I care that her father is but a Penman? What does it signify that she cannot read or write? Reading does no good to any girl that ever I heard of, but fill her

head with fond desires. But one thing sticks: when I am away, who will keep the men from her? There is Aaron Fletcher—him I knocked on the head; I wish I had beaten out his brains for him. They tell me he is mad for love of her, though she would never say a word to him. I doubt I may have to fight him again before I go. To be sure, Mr. Brinjes promises to protect her; but he is old and feeble.'

'Why,' I said, 'he will protect her by the fear with which he is regarded. One must needs respect a man who can scatter rheumatics among those who offend him.'

However, I presently promised him that, in his absence, I would sometimes visit the girl, and comfort her, and keep up her heart; although, if it came to a fight with Aaron, he was able to work me to an anvil, as they say, with fist or cudgel.

Then I begged him to consider seriously what he was about to do. First, that he was a gentleman by birth and rank, who might look to marry a gentlewoman; next, that he had no fortune, and as yet no prize-money, and only

a Lieutenant's half-pay; and lastly, that if he married, he was likely to lose the Admiral's favour.

'Truly,' he replied, 'I have considered all these things.' I don't believe that he had considered one of them before that moment. 'And I am resolved that there is no other happiness but in marrying Bess. As for duty, it points the same way, because I am promised to her. When duty and inclination point the same way, my lad, what room is there left for doubt? Answer me that. Why, if I lived a thousand years, I should never love any other woman as I love my Bess. What puzzles me,' he went on, 'is why the landsmen haven't fallen in love with her long ago. None of your mincing, mealy-mouthed, fine ladies, all patches and powder, made up so that you know not what they are like, with hoop and petticoat; but an honest lass, true and loyal—you can see what she is like, for she wears neither hoop nor powder; and she tells no lies, and you know her mind directly she speaks. That is the girl

for me, Luke. Hang me if I understand why she wasn't, long ago, the girl for you.'

'Fortunately for me,' I said, 'your inclinations and mine are not set on the same woman.'

'Why, if I had been in your place, Luke, I would have carried off the girl, if I could have got her in no other way. If she were to change her mind now, and to refuse me, I would carry her off, whether she liked it or not. There would be a prize to tow into port, and all for myself, Luke—all for myself!'

CHAPTER XVII.

IN BUTCHER ROW.

'AARON,' Mr. Westmoreland said, 'is a cruel and revengeful man.'

Afterwards I remembered these words. For my own part I did not understand this judgment, though I had known Aaron all my life, first as a great hulking boy, and then as the strongest and biggest man in Deptford. On what grounds did Mr. Westmoreland consider him cruel and revengeful? The judgments of weak and timid men, like those of women, are shrewd, and often true. Yet Aaron had done nothing, so far as the world knew, on account of which he could be called cruel and revengeful. Masterful and headstrong he was, and the world accounted him a brave man, but not revengeful. The

present moment, however, was likely to bring out whatever evil passions lay in his soul, for he had been publicly humiliated and brought to shame by the man who had taken from him the woman he loved; and when he met his friends in the street they seemed to be laughing in their sleeves at him. Therefore, Aaron conceived an act of revenge which was as audacious as it was villainous. If he was revengeful, it must be admitted that he was also bold.

He first showed his teeth on the Monday morning after the fight at Horn Fair. Bess was engaged in making a beef-steak pudding for dinner, her sleeves rolled up, singing over her work. Her father sat at his desk before the window, bent over his work, with round spectacles on nose, undisturbed by his daughter's singing. A sudden diminution of the light caused both to look up. Aaron Fletcher's great body was blocking up the doorway.

'Bess,' he said, roughly, 'come out to me.'

'Good-morning, Aaron,' said Mr. Westmoreland. 'The weather still holds up, and keeps fine for the season.'

'Come out, Bess,' he repeated, taking no notice of her father.

'What do you want to say to me, Aaron? If it is the old thing——'

'No; it is not the old thing. Come out, I say.'

She obeyed, rolling her apron over her bare arms, and came out into the street; her father looking after her, apprehensive of mischief.

'Well, Aaron?'

He looked upon her with love in his eyes, had she been able to perceive it, and to be moved by such a gaze. But she had no pity for him, and no feeling.

'It is not the old story, Bess,' he said. 'As for that, I've had my answer. What I came to say was this. I asked a simple question—twenty times I asked that question. 'Twas not only by reason of thy good looks, Bess, though they go for something. 'Twas because, of all the Deptford girls, there was none so quiet and so steady. Well, the time has come when no honest man will ask thee that question again.'

'Have a care, Aaron,' she replied, with flaming cheek, because she knew what he meant very well. 'Have a care, Aaron. You'd best.'

'Bess, it is because I love thee still that I came to say this. No one else will say it, though they may all think it. You were with him at the fair all the evening. It was not till nigh upon midnight that he brought thee home. Is that an hour for a respectable girl? You meet him secretly at the apothecary's every day. Therefore, I say again—Bess—beware.'

'Oh! If I were to tell him,' she began, 'if I were only to tell him what you have dared to say!'

'Nay . . . tell him all. I care not a brass button. Tell him I said he is fooling thee. I will tell him that to his face. What care I for any Lieutenant of them all? He to marry! Why, he has got nothing. He is fooling thee. Mischief will come of it, Bess. Thou art too low for him, and yet too high.'

'Thank you for your pains,' she replied. 'As for me, I can take care of myself, even if all the world should take to spying through

keyholes. As for trusting myself with the Lieutenant, I think I am safer with him than with a smuggler—yes, a mere tarpaulin smuggler. You can go, Aaron. 'Tis a fine morning for a run down the river, and I dare say a sail across the Channel will do you good, and cure the headache from last Friday's cudgelling, but take care, Aaron. Some day, perhaps, we may see thee, if thou art not prudent, dangling in chains over there'—she pointed to the Isle of Dogs, where there were then hanging on the gibbets three poor wretches—'or walking after a cart-tail with the whip across your shoulders; or, maybe, marched aboard ship in handcuffs for the plantations. Get thee gone, meddler!'

'I have said what I came to say. As for thy fine lover, Bess, he crows now, but it will be my turn next, and that when he little looks for it. He has not yet done with me.'

She laughed scornfully, and returned to her pudding, tossing her head, and murmuring with wrath that bubbled and boiled over into broken words, insomuch that her father trembled.

As for Aaron, he stood still for a moment,

looking wistfully after the girl. I think he bore no malice on account of the joy with which she witnessed his downfall—nay, I verily believe that this morning he meant the best for her, and only mistrusted the Lieutenant. Then he turned and walked slowly towards the town.

Everybody knows that there are streets in Deptford where honest and sober people would not willingly be seen. They are the resort of the vile creatures which infest every seaport town, and rob the sailor of his money. Barnes Alley, French Fields, and the Stowage are full of these people, the best of whom are oyster wenches, ballad-singers, and traders in smuggled goods. The houses are chiefly of wood, black with dirt; every other door hangs out the chequers as a sign of what is sold within. Here and there may be seen the lattice of the baker or the pole of the barber. The men in these streets wear for the most part fur caps, with grey woollen stockings, and speckled breeches. Their shoes are tied with scarlet tape, and they are never without a cudgel. The women have flat caps, blue aprons, and

draggled petticoats. The talk of the people corresponds to their appearance. One of these streets is called Butcher's Row. In the midst of it, on the north side, stands a house superior to the rest, having an upper storey, and a sign carved in wood over the door—that of the 'Hope and Anchor.' There is a broad staircase within, also rich with wood carving, and a room wainscotted with dark oak, where those sit who drink something better than the common two penny.

Every tavern hath its own class of frequenters: those who use the Hope and Anchor are the men whom Custom House officers, the clerks of the Navy Offices, and police magistrates agree in regarding with suspicion. They are, for instance, men who have dealings with smugglers, yet never venture their skins across the Channel; men who traffic in sailors' tickets, and defraud sailors' wives of their pay; men who sell ship-stores of all kinds, and are modestly reluctant to show where they got them; men who buy up, before the Navy Office is ready to pay, sailors' prize-money;

those who live by finding recruits for the East India Company's service, and keep crimps' houses, where, according to common report, murder is as common as drunkenness and theft.

Into that house, therefore, Aaron walked, and, without any questions, for he knew the place, made his way into the parlour, where was sitting a man who, to judge by his friendly greeting, expected him. He was in an arm-chair before the fireplace, where, though it was a sunny day and warm for the season, a great coal fire was burning. He was provided with a tankard of small ale and a pipe of tobacco, though it was still the forenoon, when industrious men have not begun to think of tobacco. In appearance he was about fifty years of age; his cheeks were purple and his eyes were fiery; his neck was swollen; as for his nose, it was battered in the bridge, so that the original shape of it could no longer be guessed. And there was a deep red scar across his cheek, which might be a glorious proof of valour in some great action, and might also be a mark by which to remember some midnight brawl.

He wore a scratch wig and a brown coat with metal buttons, worsted stockings, and a muffler about his neck.

This man was a familiar figure in Deptford, whither he came by boat once a month or so for the transaction of business. The nature of his business was not known for certain, and there were different reports. It was whispered that he stood in with Aaron Fletcher, receiving and selling for him those cargoes of his which he brought across the Channel and landed on the coast of Essex; by others it was said that he ventured on his own account; and again, it was reported that he was a Government spy, who ought to have his ears sliced; and by others that he procured information for the Navy Office when there was going to be a Press, and therefore, if justice was done, should be carbonadoed. All this might have been true. What everyone could observe with his own eyes was—that he bought, and paid a good price for, all those things which sailors bring with them from foreign ports, such as embroidered cloths, brass pots, figures in china,

silver ornaments and idols, or even living creatures, as hyenas, wolves, monkeys, parrots, mangooses, lemurs, and the like. He was liberal with his money, and generous in the matter of drink; yet he was not regarded with friendly eyes, perhaps on account of that suspicion regarding the Navy Office and the Press. As for his name, it was Jonathan Rayment.

He nodded his head when Aaron appeared at the door, and, lifting the tankard, drank to him in silence.

'How goes business?' asked Aaron.

'Business,' Mr. Rayment replied, mournfully, 'was never worse. Honest merchants are undone. My next ship sails in a week, and as yet I have but a poor half dozen in the place.'

'That is bad.'

'And a sorry lot they are. One is a young parson who has spent his all, and, in despair, took one night to the road, and now thinks the Hue and Cry is out after him. Another is a 'prentice who hath robbed his master's till, and will be hanged if he is caught, and yet snivels

all day because he fears the Great Mogul's black Spahis almost more than he fears the gallows. One hath deserted twenty-one times from the Army, twice from the Navy, and once from the Marines, but a dissolute fellow, and rotten with disease and drink; the wind whistles through his bones. Yet he would rather cross the seas and fight for the Honourable Company than be taken, and receive the five hundred lashes which are waiting for him. He might as well die that way as by disease, for he will certainly drop to pieces before he reaches Calcutta. Another is a lawyer's clerk who, I believe, hath forged his master's name — a rogue who will fight, though small of stature. Another is a footpad, for whose apprehension ten guineas reward is offered, and so mean and chicken-hearted a rascal that I must e'en give up the fellow and content myself with the reward. Sure I am that the first smell of powder will kill him. A sorry lot, indeed. Well, if the war continues, I am ruined. For every lusty fellow can now find employment, either in a regiment or on board a ship, and

there will soon be no debtors or footpads. Alas! Aaron, I remember, not so long ago, when the peace was proclaimed, and the regiments disbanded, and the ships paid off. Then we had for nothing our choice of the best. Rogues are cheap when 'tis their only choice between the gallows and the Company.'

The meaning of all this was that the respectable Mr. Rayment was nothing more or less than a crimp by trade: one, that is, who seeks out and deludes, inveigles, or persuades recruits for the service of the East India Company, whether for their land or sea service, keeping them snug in the house till the ship sails. As regards their navy, the Company hath, I have been told, a fleet of a hundred ships afloat, to man which is difficult, and requires the service of many such men as Mr. Rayment, whose methods are, as is well known, to decoy or persuade young men, and especially young men who are friendless or in trouble through some folly or crime, into their houses, and there keep them, whether they will or no, by violence if necessary, but more often by keep-

ing them continually drunk, so that they know not what they have undertaken, or what papers they have signed, until the time comes when they can be put aboard. As for the service of the Company, the young gentlemen who are sent out by the Honourable Council to Calcutta or Madras as writers or clerks, do frequently, as everybody knows, arrive at great riches, and come home nabobs. But I never yet heard that any of the poor fellows who have been decoyed into the crimps' houses, and shipped on board an East Indiaman for foreign service in the Company, have ever returned at all, rich or poor.

Between Aaron and this man there was some understanding or partnership, but of what nature, or to what extent, I have not learned. Rayment had a shop in Leman Street (quite apart from the houses in which he kept his recruits), where he sold many things besides the curiosities which he bought of the sailors in Wapping and Poplar, as well as at Deptford. Perhaps he disposed of Aaron's cargoes for him after a run. Perhaps he arranged, with Aaron's

help, for the passage of those gentlemen, whether Jacobites or Frenchmen, who are anxious to get backwards and forwards between England and France without the observation or the knowledge of the Government of either country. There is abundant occupation for such gentry as Mr. Rayment, whose end is often what rogues call a dance in the air. And just as Aaron had his boat-building yard, which is a most innocent and harmless business, so Mr. Rayment had his innocent shop in Leman Street, and was to outward seeming an honest citizen, who went forth from his shop to church on Sunday morning, dressed in black cloth, white silk stockings, and japanned shoes, with a newly curled and powdered wig, like the best of them, and was permitted to exchange the time of day and the compliments of the season with gentlemen of reputation and known piety. Thus may villains walk unsuspected among honest men.

'Well,' said Aaron, 'I dare say you will not starve. What do you say now to a tall recruit?'

'What do you want for him, Aaron?'

'You shall have him for nothing.'

Mr. Rayment looked suspicious, as one that feareth the gifts of his friends, and shook his head.

'For nothing, Aaron? What do you want me to do for you, then?'

'Nothing. I will give you a tall and lusty recruit. That is plain, is it not?'

'The door is shut, Aaron. Tell me what you mean.'

'Give me the men to take him, and he is yours.'

'To take him?' Mr. Rayment leaned forward and whispered, 'Is he not a willing recruit, then? I love a fellow who is in trouble, and desires to be put into a place of safety.'

'I don't know about his willingness,' said Aaron, grimly.

'If he is not willing, is he a fellow to be persuaded easily? As far as a skinful of punch is concerned, I care not about the expense, as long as I get a lusty fellow.'

'He is in no trouble, and he is not willing. It will take half a dozen men to carry him along, and a week's starvation to make him even pretend to be willing.'

''Tis dangerous, Aaron. I like not this kidnapping work. We crimps have got a bad name, though everyone knows my own honesty. Yet we must not openly rival the Press.'

'Why, you have done it hundreds of times.'

'Ay, for the picking up of a starving rustic, or a drunken sailor, or a disbanded soldier, and swearing, when they are sober again, that they have enlisted: that is neither here nor there. And it is for the good of the poor fellows. Their pay is regular, and the climate considered by some to be wholesome. It is playing the part of Providence to help the poor men with the service of the East India Company.'

'No doubt,' said Aaron.

'Give me your recruit who comes red-handed, the runners after him, and asks for nothing but to be shipped safe out of the country as soon as possible. I care not how many

rogueries he hath committed. Give me your lusty villain, who hath stolen his master's horse; or the gallant who hath squandered all his stock. These give no trouble. But with pressed and kidnapped men it is different.'

'I doubt if you could persuade this fellow,' said Aaron, 'not if you made him drink a cask of brandy.'

'We have had misfortunes, too,' Mr. Rayment continued. 'Only last May there was brought to my house as sweet a country lad as you would desire to see. He was in trouble about a girl, and desired to serve the King. Well, in the morning, when he got sober, and learned that he was enlisted in the service of the Company, he behaved shamefully. Nothing would do but he must go free or fight for it. So my honest fellows tried persuasion, and in the end there were collarbones and ribs broken, and that country lad was carried out and laid upon Whitechapel Mount, stripped, and as dead as any gentleman can wish to be. Think of the loss it was to me.'

'Well,' said Aaron, 'your fellows must not persuade my man this way.'

'What does it mean, Aaron?'

'It is a private matter. You need not have anything to do with it. Send me half a dozen stout fellows, and you shall know nothing at all about it, except that another recruit was enlisted, who stayed at the house till the ship sailed, and was taken on board drunk and speechless. You will have nothing to do with it but to lend me your men and your house.'

'I don't like it, Aaron. It may turn out bad. Has the man friends?'

'He has. Yet this his friends will never suspect.'

'I don't like the job, Aaron. Kidnapping should only be practised on strangers and rustics. Is he a tradesman?'

'No. It is a private grudge, Jonathan. I will make it worth your while. I must have this man put out of the way. He is a Lieutenant in the King's Navy.'

Mr. Rayment jumped from his chair.

'A King's Lieutenant! Aaron, would you hang us all!'

'Sit down, you fool. It is a safe job. Besides, you shall have nothing to do with it. Sit down, and listen.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DARK NIGHT'S JOB.

THE evenings, towards the end of October, set in early; and when there is no moon, the nights are as dark as in midwinter. It is, therefore, a favourable season for the footpads who molest the roads outside great towns, the thieves who prowl the streets, and the highwaymen who stop the coaches. At Deptford there are neither footpads nor street-prowlers, though robbers enough, Lord knows; but they rob, for the most part, on a different plan, and within the houses. In times of peace, when a sailor cannot readily find a ship, or a disbanded Marine cannot find work, there have been known cases of robbery about Deptford and Greenwich. But in such a year as 1756, when

the sailors were all too few for the King's ships, and they were continually enrolling new regiments of Marines, no one in these towns gave a thought to the dangers of footpads, and a child might have carried, by day or by night, a bag full of guineas from the dockyard gate to the bridge, without fear of molestation. Least of all would such a man as Jack Easterbrook trouble his head about robbers.

He left the Gun Tavern, where he had spent the evening with the Lieutenants and Midshipmen who used the house, at a quarter before ten or thereabouts, carrying no other weapon than his hanger, and began leisurely to walk home down Church Lane. The upper part of this road, when you have passed the church and the Trinity Almshouses, is darker than the lower part, by reason of great trees and a high hedge on either hand. Light or dark, 'twas all the same to Jack, who marched along the middle of the road, head in air, his thoughts turned on Bess, as they commonly were at this time, or else wondering how long before he should receive his promised commission. Soon

it certainly would be, even though, through favouritism and lack of interest, he should, for the present, be passed over, because officers and men were growing scarce, and my Lords the Commissioners wanted all they could get. And once afloat again, with, if kind Heaven willed, a fighting Captain, there would be prizes and prize-money, and, perhaps, swift promotion. And then home again, to the arms of his dear girl. This, I take it, is the dream of every sailor; whereas, for many, instead of returning to the arms of a fond mistress, they are lowered, with a cannon-shot at their heels, into the cold ocean, or come home lopped of half their limbs, only to find their inconstant mistress in another's arms.

Now, as he was thus striding along, swinging his arms as he went, he became suddenly aware of shuffling footsteps and whispers, which betoken the presence of men lurking behind the trees; but before he had time to ask himself what this might mean, a fellow rushed out from the darkness, armed with a pistol in one hand, which he pointed at Jack's head, and a

lantern in the other, which he turned, unsteadily in the manner of one who is afraid, upon his face, crying, 'Your money, or your life!'

Jack was so astonished that, for a moment, he made no reply. Then he sprang upon the fellow, and caught him by the throat. 'My money or my life? Impudent dog, I will squeeze thine own life out!' And so shook him in his grasp—thumb on breathing-pipe—as a terrier shakes a rat, so that the man dropped pistol and lantern, and would have experienced the fate of the rat in another minute but for the help of his friends. As it was, he would have cried for mercy, but he could neither cry out nor breathe, so tight were the fingers at his throat. Indeed, when he was rescued, half a minute later, his face was already purple, his eyes starting from his head like a shrimp's, and his tongue swollen, so that he was fain to sit upon the ground awhile; and, for ten minutes or so, he knew not whether he were really dead and in the next world, and therefore about to reap the reward of his many

villainies, or whether he were still living and ready, for his greater damnation, to swell that long list.

When the light of the lantern fell upon Jack's face, there followed a sharp short whistle; and, upon that signal, half a dozen lusty fellows sprang upon him at the same moment from both sides of the road. He had no time to draw his sword or to make any resistance of any kind, for one of them fetched him from behind, while the others threatened him in front, so foul a stroke with an oaken cudgel that he fell like a log, and without a word, senseless upon the ground, dragging with him the man whom he held by the throat.

Then the men all crowded over him ready with their cudgels, and as courageous as you please, their man being down. But it is of no use to cudgel a senseless man.

They were joined by another man—it was Aaron—a tall fellow, truly. He seemed like a giant among these ruffians, who, after the kind of riverside villains, were short of stature, though stout. This man stood over the fallen

Lieutenant and looked upon the prostrate body with eyes of satisfaction.

'He fell at once,' said Aaron, as if dissatisfied. 'I looked for more fighting. I thought there would be much more fighting. I hoped to see him do his best before he was overpowered. Show a light here.' One of them—not the first villain, who was now sitting on the ground slowly getting his breath and still wondering whether he were dead or not—held the lantern before Jack's face. The eyes were closed and his cheek white.

'Master,' said the man, 'I doubt the gentleman is killed outright. This is a bad job for all of us.'

'Killed! Saw ever one a man killed by a stroke of a cudgel? I wish he was killed. I wish he was dead and buried. Yet he shall never say that I caused him to be killed. Such a man as this does not die of a cracked skull. Show the light again.'

This time he looked more carefully. The Lieutenant was in a dead swoon, just as Aaron himself had fallen into at Horn Fair, but it was

a far shrewder knock and a deeper faint. Aaron raised an eyelid, but there was no sign of life or any shrinking from the light. And now he saw that blood was flowing from the wound.

'He will lie quiet for awhile yet. Well, men, here is your new recruit.'

The men looked at each other, and murmured that with King's officers—for now they saw the uniform by the light of the lantern—they would not meddle.

'Not meddle, ye villains?' cried Aaron; 'why, you have meddled with him already, and have well-nigh murdered him, and will very likely hang, every mother's son, for this night's job. Wherefore, take him up and carry him away; 'tis your only chance to save your own necks. Get him across the river with all despatch, and snug indoors.'

The men hesitated. One of them murmured, with an oath, that they would not hang alone.

'When he comes to his senses,' Aaron continued, taking no notice of this threat, 'tell him that at the least movement you will brain him.

But you are not to brain him, remember, or your master will lose the very best recruit he ever had, and will cause you all to swing. What? There is enough against you for every man to swing.' This assurance was made more emphatic by the language which this sort most readily understood. Still the men hesitated. The King's uniform frightened them. They had often enough kidnapped a poor drunken sailor, but never before a Lieutenant. Then Aaron swore at them, and stamped his foot upon the ground.

'Quick, I say. What? You dare to argue? Take him up. So. Cover him with a jacket to hide his white stockings and breeches, though the night is dark. That will do—now—with a will.'

They took him up, the whole six sullenly lending a hand, and carried him as men carry a drunken man.

'Carry him to the Stairs, and row him across the river as quickly as you may. Bestow him in the upper room at the back, where you keep the chains and the bars for your unruly recruits.

Watch him by day and night. He will try to escape, that is certain; as soon as he recovers consciousness he will try to escape. Let him understand that he will be knocked on the head if he makes the attempt. And, remember, he is a match for any three of ye—ay, the whole six, I verily believe—for he is as strong as Samson. If he succeeds in escaping he will have you all in Newgate. He will drag the house down, if he can, in order to escape. You are in great danger, my friends, whatever happens. Yet I would not have him murdered. If he is not put on board alive, there will be a warrant out against you for highway robbery and violence, and hanged you will be, every man. Therefore, I say, take care of him.' Thus he spoke: now showing that he wished the man dead, and then warning them not to kill him. 'It is but three or four days' nursing, with chains and a watch set day and night, and then you shall hocus his drink and put him on board, and shove the drunken beast down the companion to the lower deck with the recruits, and the bo's'n's rope's-end first, in case he com-

plains; and the triangles next, in case he is stubborn and mutinous. I should like to see him tied up for three dozen. Now, march.'

The men replied nothing, but slung their burden and prepared to obey.

'March, I say; and, look ye, the Press was last night out on Tower Hill, and the night before they were busy at Redriff, where there was fighting and warm work, so that the men's spirit is up and they will brook no resistance. Perhaps—I know not—they are out to-night at Deptford. If the Press should take you, carrying a King's officer unconscious and with an open wound in his head, my mates—why—you are dead men, and already little better.'

The men needed no more, but marched off at the double, as they say, the thought of the Press lending wings to their heels.

'To knock down,' said Aaron, when they were gone, 'and to kidnap a Lieutenant in the King's Navy, and to ship him, drugged and drunk, on board an East Indiaman for a recruit, is, I should say, high treason, at the least. But, none of the fellows know me, and who is to

prove that I gave the orders? If the Lieutenant is dead already, they will throw his body into the river. If he is not dead, most of these poor fellows will surely hang, for one or other of them is certain to turn King's evidence. Yet, if he tries to escape they will kill him, being used to murder, and thinking little of it. If they knew it, this is their best chance. If they do not kill him—what then? He goes aboard. And then? I know not. He will be put on board in rags. No one will believe him if he calls himself an officer. I doubt if the Lieutenant will come back again to Deptford. Whether he comes back or not, they cannot charge the thing on me.'

Certainly, there never yet was conceived a more diabolical plot, or one of greater impudence, than to waylay and kidnap an officer bearing His Majesty's commission, to keep him close prisoner in a crimp's house, chained and half-starved, watched day and night, and then, as was intended, to thrust him down into the hold of an East Indiaman, seemingly stupid with drink (but in reality bereft of his senses

by some noxious drug), and to pretend that he was a volunteer recruit. It is very well known, and matter of common notoriety, that many men have been thus kidnapped and kept prisoners and then shipped under this pretence. They are carried below, apparently drunk, and laid among the other recruits, for the most part a most desperate, villainous company. Here they lie, and when they partly recover they are already out to sea, in the gloomy 'tween decks, most likely speechless with sea-sickness, among strange and horrible companions, and no one on board who will so much as listen to their story. Here was revenge, indeed, if only it could be carried out! And what was to prevent? I have never heard that a King's officer hath been thus treated, which makes it the more wonderful for Aaron to have devised so bold a scheme. Yet not so bold as it seems, because, if Jack could thus be carried on board, in rags, unwashed, unshaven, his hair about his ears, who would believe his affirmation that he was a commissioned officer? Why, if such a ragamuffin told this tale to the petty officers

he would be rope's-ended, and if to the First Lieutenant or to the Captain himself, he would most likely be tied up and accommodated with three dozen, or perhaps six dozen, for insubordination; for the officers of the Company are said to be ready as those of the King's service—who, Heaven knows, are never too lenient—in dealing with refractory recruits. Yet sooner or later, one would think, the thing would be discovered; though not on board the ship. Then the Lieutenant would return home and prefer his complaint, and punishment would follow. But Aaron, only an ignorant fellow, thought of nothing but revenge. There are some men to whom the most terrible punishment in the future seems as nothing compared with the gratification of present revenge.

The gang of rogues had not gone farther towards the town than St. Paul's Church, marching quickly along the middle of the road, ready at the least alarm of the Press to drop their burden and to run in all directions, when they encountered another party, con-

sisting of three negroes — one carrying a lantern—and a gentleman with a wooden leg. The negroes were, like these villains, armed with cudgels, but they also carried cutlasses.

'Halt!' cried the gentleman, who was none other than the Admiral. 'Turn the lantern on these men, Cudjo.'

The negro valiantly advanced and showed a light upon the party. They wore sailors' clothes — namely, slops or petticoats, short jackets, and hats turned up straight on all three sides; and their hair was long, and hung about their necks. It was, indeed, their business on the Tower Hill, and in the neighbourhood of Ratcliffe, Shadwell, and Wapping, to pretend to be honest sailors, and therefore to wear their dress.

'Why,' said the Admiral, 'they are sailors! Whither bound, my lads, and what are you carrying?'

'By your leave, your Honour,' said one of them, 'we are carrying a comrade who is too drunk to walk, and we are fearful of leaving

him in the hedge-side by reason of the Press.'

'Ay . . . ay . . . the Press—well—my lads, I would that the Press could take you all, and confound you for a poor lousy chicken-hearted crew. I wish I knew where the Press is this night, that I might set them on to you. I wish my negroes were six instead of three. Go your ways. March, Cudjo.'

The men made no reply, but hurried away as quickly as they could. The Admiral looked after them awhile.

'I doubt,' he said, 'that all was not right. They looked a plaguey cut-throat set of rascals. Perhaps 'twas not a drunken comrade after all.'

Then he continued his way home in the usual marching order, but slowly, because a wooden-legged man who has twinges of gout in his remaining toes, does not walk fast. Presently, the man who held the lantern spied something in the road which glittered. He picked it up. 'Twas a gold-laced hat with the King's cockade.

'Men,' said the Admiral, 'this is the hat

of an officer. What does this mean? Look about you, every one.'

The road was quite dark, owing to the trees and the cloudy night. Presently, however, the men found a pistol in the road, and, beside it, the traces of scuffling feet and torn lace, and, worse still, plain marks of blood upon the road.

'Here,' said the Admiral, 'hath been wild work. Torn ruffles—a gold-laced hat—a pistol—and a gang of bloodthirsty cut-throats carrying a body with them. A drunken comrade, forsooth! And afraid of the Press; would to God the Press might take them red-handed! Whom have they murdered? For murder, surely, it is, and nothing less. Men'—he turned to his negroes—'I am wooden-legged, and cannot run. Wherefore, do you leave me here, and with what speed you may, hasten after that company, and call upon them to surrender, and, if they will not, raise the town upon them. Draw cutlasses—shoulder cutlasses—quick march—double. Run, ye black devils, as if your horny grandfather himself was after you!'

If the Admiral had ordered his negroes to jump from London Bridge or the Monument they would have done it, I am quite certain, so great was the terror with which they regarded him. Therefore, at the word, they drew their weapons, and set off running with the greatest resolution, and at a pretty brisk pace, showing all the outward signs of zeal and of courage.

Alas! negroes are in essentials all alike. No man ever yet found courage in the black African, any more than industry, patience, or honesty, unless the white man was behind him with Father Stick for encouragement.

The night was dark. Nothing more daunts a negro than darkness, because to him the night is peopled—especially when there is no white man present—with all kinds of fearful and terrible creatures; therefore, in their running, they presently began to feel the gloomy influence of the hour, and their speed slackened gradually. Next they were no longer young; and it would be foolish to expect of those whose wool is grey the courage which they never possessed when it was still

black. Thirdly, the Admiral was out of sight and out of hearing. And, again, if the enemy refused to surrender, whom were they to alarm? What were they to say? What road were they to take? Lastly—a consideration which weighed with them above all others—what if they were, unhappily, to overtake the men? They were but three to six—and three feeble old blacks to six lusty young whites! Then might occur difficulties unforeseen by the Admiral, who naturally thought that his own crew must always gain the victory.

These doubts and difficulties suggested themselves to the brave fellows at one and the same moment—namely, the first moment when they thought their footsteps out of the Admiral's hearing. They halted and looked at each other.

'Breddren,' said Snowball, 'let us stop and deliberation ourselves. Where am de enemy? Fled—flown—yah! De poo' coward!—run clean out ob our sight!—'fraid to face brave black man!'

'S'pose,' said Cudjo, 'we wait just quarter

ob an hour: den go back and tell his Honour men clean gone: run away before us, for fear ob us?'

This was agreed to. Nothing more was said, but all three sat on a doorstep and waited until they thought the quarter of an hour seemed to be passed, and so they might safely return.

Even if they had followed the party across to the Stairs, supposing they knew which direction to take, they would scarcely have overtaken them, so expeditious were the men in getting to the river and in pushing off, the bank being at this time quite deserted.

Therefore, when a reasonable time had elapsed, the valiant negroes began to return slowly, but still brandishing their cutlasses. Arrived within five minutes of the house, they broke into a quick trot, so that they reached the doors in a panting and breathless condition, as happens to those who very earnestly and zealously carry out instructions.

They reported that at the bottom of Church Lane they came upon the enemy, and called upon him to surrender at discretion or take

the terrible consequences. The enemy chose the latter, and retreated rapidly. In other words, they all vanished, but whether down Butcher Row or in the direction of Rogue Lane, which leads into the open fields, south of Rotherhithe, they could not tell, and, in the darkness and uncertainty, they thought it best to return for further orders.

'Why,' said the Admiral, ''tis a dark night, truly. And if they have sailed out of sight, and we have lost them, there is no more to be said,' and so put away the torn ruffles, the laced hat, and the pistol, in case they might be wanted for evidence of robbery and violence, if not of murder, and ordered the men an extra ration of rum, and so to bed. Fortunately, he had no suspicion that the hat and the ruffles belonged to Jack Easterbrook, otherwise his night's rest would have been disturbed. As for the pistol, however, that, he discovered on examination, had not been discharged.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE CRIMP'S HOUSE.

MR. JONATHAN RAYMENT was not only a crimp (though at his shop in Leman Street they knew not this, and in his houses they knew not his name), but he was a crimp in a large way of business, as they say of honest trades, being the possessor of half a dozen houses in different parts of London, all kept for no other purpose than the receiving of recruits for the East India Company. There is no concealment about this business; everybody knows that they are crimps' houses. One of them was in High Street, Wapping; one in Chancery Lane; a third in Butcher Row, at the back of St. Clement's Church; and another in Tothill Fields. He employed a good many men

to decoy and entrap his prey. Some among them went dressed soberly, like substantial citizens, or in scarlet, like half-pay captains, and frequented the gaming-houses, where they made the acquaintance of those who were driven to despair by losing all; some haunted the coffee-houses, taverns, theatres, and mug-houses. Here they picked up young countrymen who had run through their money, 'prentices who had robbed their masters, and even young gentlemen of quality who had wasted their substance in riotous living, and now saw nothing before them but a debtors' prison. Others, again, worked chiefly in the neighbourhood of Wapping and the town, being always on the look out for rustics and labouring men out of work, disbanded soldiers, paid-off sailors, men discharged for misconduct, and rogues in hiding. These they either bought or entrapped, and sometimes when they could not persuade, they hesitated not to kidnap. It was from this gang that the six fellows came who assaulted Jack.

When they got to the riverside, still run-

ning at the double, being horribly afraid of the Press, and knowing not whether they might encounter the gang face to face, they made all haste to deposit their charge in the boat, and rowed off. Presently the cold air playing on Jack's bare head began to revive him, and he half-opened his eyes and began to collect his senses. Fortunately, the men paid no attention to him, or it might have been all over with him. At first he understood nothing except that he was in a boat, but on what water he knew not. Next he understood that the men were rowing up stream. And so, little by little, some knowledge of what happened came to him, and he wondered whither they were taking him, and why he was thus treated. He understood, that is to say, that he had been attacked, and perhaps robbed, and that he had been in a swoon. More he knew not. 'No voyage,' he told me afterwards, 'ever seemed longer to me than this three-quarters of a mile from Deptford to King Edward's Stairs. And I knew not whether to rejoice or to tremble when the men shipped oars and the boat's bows struck the

stairs. The event was doubtful, and only one thing certain—namely, that he was in hands which meant no good to him; that he had been knocked silly for a time, and was still incapable of making resistance; that it was growing late, and good people were abed; and that he had been conveyed to the other side of the river, where honest people are scarce. For all these reasons he resolved upon continuing senseless as long as possible. If, he thought, it had been intended to kill him, why had they not done so right out? Why had they not tumbled him into the river? Why had they taken all the trouble of carrying him to the riverside and so across the water if they were going to kill him? And if not, what were they going to do with him?

King Edward's Stairs, whither they brought him, are the next but one, going down the river, to Execution Dock. These stairs are at no time in the day so well frequented as Wapping Old Stairs and Wapping New Stairs, higher up, or Shadwell Stairs, lower down. After dark, they are for the most part deserted,

or simply used by the river pirates and night plunderers for the landing of the booty they have gotten from ships and barges. On this night there were no watermen on the stairs, and only, at the head, clustered together for warmth, under a pent-house, which would keep off rain, if not wind and cold, half a dozen of the miserable boys who pick up their living in the mud of the river, and are called mudlarks or rateatchers. When they grow up, they may perhaps become lumpers or scuffle-hunters, if they are lucky, and so get a chance of dying in their beds. But for the most part they are destined to become what are called light horsemen (that is, robbers of ships lying in the river) and plunderers working for the receivers of Wapping and Shadwell, and pretty certain to be either knocked on the head in some brawl or hanged for robbery.

The boys looked up on hearing the steps; but, seeing a dead body (as it seemed) being carried by half a dozen men, they prudently observed silence, and lay snug, lest they themselves might be put into the condition of being

unable to give evidence. The men carried their burden up the steps, cursing and grumbling at the weight—a body measuring six feet one is not a light weight even for six men to carry. Then they turned the lantern once more upon his face.

'He is stark dead,' said one. 'Let us empty his pockets and chuck him into the river.'

'No—no,' said another. 'Bring him along. He is not dead.'

So they lifted him up and carried him along the streets, where by this time the taverns were closed, and the people all gone to their beds. Jack knew very well that they must be somewhere among those streets of sailors' houses and sailors' shops which lie between the riverside and the market-gardens of Shadwell and Wapping. But still he understood not what was intended by carrying him here.

Presently they halted at a house—it was in the High Street, Wapping. By this time Jack had cautiously opened his eyes. He saw that

he was in the hands of a company of six. What had these fellows to do with him? Why did they take all this trouble?

Then the door was opened, and they carried him into the house and up the stairs into a room at the back. Here they flung him down upon the floor, and that so roughly that his wound was opened and he swooned away once more.

When he recovered, he found that they were dragging his clothes from him.

'Now,' said one of them, 'throw a blanket over him, Parson. Lay them things ready for him to put on; they're the clothes of the poor devil who died here last week. If he wants to escape, he will have either to run naked or to put on these duds, instead of his fine uniform, which will change him so as his own mother won't know him again. Perhaps she won't get the chance of setting eyes upon her boy for many a year to come. Now then, smart's the word, ye lubbers; we've got our man snug and safe, and now we'll have some supper, and watch turn about.'

Jack was now wide-awake, but his head was still heavy. Things looked black. He was in a house at Wapping, and he was stripped naked; he had an open and bleeding wound in the head; a bundle of rags was lying beside him in place of his own clothes; he was guarded by half a dozen ruffians, as ugly and villainous-looking a crew as one may desire. In looking at them, being, perhaps, a little light-headed with his wound, he began to think about Mr. Brinjes' piratical crew, and how they fought and killed each other. Perhaps these gentlemen might begin to fight after they had taken their supper. Perhaps they would all kill each other. Meanwhile he lay perfectly still, with one eye half-open.

Then the man they called 'Parson' came upstairs, bringing food and drink, which he set upon the table, and they took their supper for the most part in silence, or, if there was any talk, it was disguised and rendered unintelligible by the oaths and cursing which wrapped it up. The fellows, in fact, were uneasy; they had faithfully carried out their orders, but they

knew not what might happen in consequence to themselves. It is the punishment of such men as these that they must needs do what their master bids them, as much as if they were bound hand and foot to the Devil, because they are one and all in his power, and he might cause every man to be hanged, if he chose. The 'Parson' had now lit the fire, which was blazing cheerfully, and there was a candle on the table. The room was small, and the windows were barred; the air was heavy and stinking. As for the 'Parson,' Jack observed that he was a young man, whose face bore the marks of deep dejection, but not of the brutal habits which were stamped upon the faces of his associates. And he was dressed in a cassock. What was a clergyman doing in such a house?

When the men had eaten their supper, they began to pass round the pannikin. They passed it so quickly that Jack hoped they would speedily get drunk, so that the fighting might begin. They did get drunk, but they did not fight. One after the other, they fell asleep, until two only were left awake. These

were to take the first watch, and had therefore been obliged to spare the pannikin. The Parson quietly laid the four who were asleep upon the floor, their feet to the fire. Then he took the candle and looked at Jack.

'Our new recruit,' he said, speaking with the voice of a scholar, and not in the coarse and rude speech of his companions, 'our new recruit appears to be overcome with fatigue. Zeal for the service hath, doubtless, laid him low.'

He laid aside the hair, and looked at the wound. 'It is more than fatigue,' he said. 'I perceive that he hath received a hurt. It is not uncommon with those who come to this house.'

'He fell down,' one of the men replied; 'and he fell down so gallus hard that he knocked his head upon a stone, and hasn't opened his eyes nor his mouth since.'

'Gentlemen, the man hath an ugly wound. 'Twere a pity—his Honour would take it ill—if anything happened to this man, a tall and proper fellow, for want of a little care. By

your permission, I will bring cold water and dress the wound.'

They made no objection, and the Parson presently returned with a clout and cold water, with which he washed the blood, and applied plaister to the wound. As for the bleeding, it was caused by the cutting of the ear rather than the blow on the skull. This done, he laid a blanket over Jack's bare limbs.

'He will now,' said the Parson, 'when he recovers, lie easier. It is long since you brought in so brave a recruit. Call me, gentlemen, when he recovers; the pulse is quick and strong; he will not long be senseless. I am but in the next room. Shall I bring you some more rum, gentlemen?'

'You may, Parson. The jug is out. Fill it up. We have four hours' watch before us. And more tobacco.'

The fire was now burning low. Through the bars of the windows Jack could see the stars, and presently a clock hard by struck twelve. He was a recruit, he now understood. In other words, he had been kidnapped, and

was in the house of a crimp. Everybody has heard of such places, but they do not generally kidnap officers of the King's Navy. However, it seemed as if they were not going to murder him, which was a comfort. No man, not even the bravest, likes to be knocked on the head, in a house of crimps, while helpless and faint.

The men who were on watch filled and lit their pipes, and began to talk in low voices.

'I'm queerly sleepy, mate,' said one. 'How hard they breathe, don't they?'

'There were no orders about his purse,' said the other. 'Five guineas and a crown. That's a guinea and a shilling apiece. Little enough, too, for our trouble. What about the clothes?'

'There's no orders about the clothes. Let us have them too.'

'No, No. Let us burn the clothes. Guineas can't tell no tales. But a King's uniform can. Best burn 'em.'

'Mate,' said the other, 'I don't like the job. It's no laughing matter, I doubt. Let us cut his throat at once, while the others are asleep.

We can slash his face, and lay him naked in the fields, so as no one won't know him again.'

'Same as we did that other fellow who tried to get away. We took him to Whitechapel Mount, though.'

'We've knocked many on the head before.'

'But never a King's officer. This one won't order up no man again for six dozen, will he?'

'Perhaps he is dead already.'

The speaker rose and took the candle. Then he stooped beside the motionless figure and slowly passed the candle across the eyes. If you do this before a man who is sound asleep, he will become restless and uneasy even if he is not actually awake; if you do it to a waking man it is difficult indeed for him not to open his eyes or wink them. But Jack made no sign.

'He is still senseless,' said the man. 'I wonder if he is really dead.' He felt his heart.

'No; his heart is beating.'

'Mate?' asked the other. Jack under-

stood, though his eyes were closed, that there was a gesture as of a knife across the throat.

'Twould make all sure,' he said; 'dead men tell no tales. Suppose we were to ship him, what is to prevent their finding out that they've a King's officer on board? Suppose we finish him off now, who will be able to split on us? Let us take and do it—you and me, while he's unconscious. What is it? One slice of the knife, and we've done with him, in a neat and workmanlike manner.'

'Hold hard a bit, mate. What about the tall fellow on the other side? You heard what he said. Besides, the Parson knows. We can't cut the Parson's throat as well. But it's the tall fellow I fear, not the Parson.'

'If it comes to hanging,' said the other, swearing horribly, 'damme if I swing alone.'

'You'll have me kicking alongside of you, mate, and the rest of us. We shall all swing in a row.'

'Ay, and he shall kick with us. Oh! I know who he is.'

'Who is he?'

'That's my secret. I know him. And that is enough.'

'Tell me, my hearty.'

'His name is Fletcher—Aaron Fletcher. He's a boat-builder by trade, but he's got a boat of his own, which he keeps sometimes at Gravesend, and sometimes up the Medway, and sometimes she lays off Leigh, in Essex, where I've unladen many a cargo for him. If so be we are brought into trouble by this night's job pass the word for a warrant to arrest Aaron Fletcher. Don't you forget the name—Aaron Fletcher, of Deptford, him as give the orders, and stood behind a tree, ready to whistle when the lantern showed we'd got him.'

'I won't forget, mate. Let us leave the job till to-morrow. If it's to be a throat job, take in the rest: make 'em all have a hand in it—Parson and all. Every man shall have his hand in it. What! Are we two to be hanged and the rest get off?'

They went back to their pipes and their rum.

'The ship sails next Saturday at noon,'

said one. 'We've got but ten recruits, counting the Parson, and I doubt if the Captain will let him go. Because why? 'Tis useful and handy to have a man in the place like the Parson, who won't get drunk, and does the house-work beautiful, and doesn't look outside the doors for fear of being taken. There's the 'prentice and the footpad, and the fellow who sits and snivels all day long. What with the war and the new ships and the new regiments, the Company's service will go to the dogs; and what is to become of us? It is a poor show after the stout fellows we used to hale on board, all so drunk that they couldn't stand.'

'The Captain says business must get better, and he can't have a set o' lazy rogues eating their heads off. Why did the Captain send us to Deptford? He must be in it as well.'

'If he is, who's to prove it? He didn't give no orders. Pass the pannikin.'

Their pipes being now out, they began to drink faster, Jack looking on, half-tempted to pretend recovery and to ask for a tot of the drink. Fortunately, he refrained. For, in a

short time, he perceived that their heads began to drop and their eyes to swim. 'Never,' thought Jack, 'have I seen men get drunk in this fashion before.' Then they caught at the table to prevent falling, and poured more rum from the jug into the pannikin and drank it, but with unsteady hand. Then their heads nodded heavily at each other, with wild eyes, as if they would fain keep sober; and then one of them fell from his chair upon the floor, and, with a drunken curse upon his lips, fell instantly fast asleep. 'The rum must have the Devil in it,' Jack said to himself.

There was now only one man left of the whole six. It was the man who was so anxious to finish off the job in workmanlike fashion. He looked round him stupidly. His five comrades were lying on the floor, breathing heavily. His eyes fell upon the corner where Jack lay. He rose up, and opened the sailor's knife which hung round his neck.

'I'll cut his throat,' he said with drunken cunning 'while the others are asleep. In the morning I shall say they did it, and I looked

on, but couldn't prevent, so drunk they were, and me the only sober one. The Captain, he won't let 'em all be hanged, poor devils! when I tell him how they got drunk, and would do it, whatever I could say.' Here he rolled, and nearly fell. He reached for the jug, and drank from it. Then his legs gave way beneath him, and he fell upon his back. He tried to get up, still holding his knife in his hand, and meditating the murder. But he fell back, his head pillowed upon a sleeping brother's leg.

'I'll cut his throat,' he said, 'first thing in the morning, before the others wake. If Aaron—Aaron—comes to ask—I'll cut his throat, too—and the Parson's, too—and the Captain's. I'll cut all their throats.'

He said no more, and then there was nothing heard but the heavy breathing and snoring of the whole six. And Jack heard the clock of St. John's strike two. He was not killed yet, and the murderers were dead drunk. If only he could find the strength to get up, and to put on the rags which lay beside him in place of his own clothes!

CHAPTER XX.

OF JACK'S ESCAPE.

HIS resolution of the doubt whether he was to be immediately slaughtered or not naturally gave the Lieutenant considerable satisfaction. The villain who was chiefly set upon his murder was fast asleep, breathing heavily, the knife still in his hand with which he had intended to carry out his diabolical design had not the rum overmastered him.

He tried to sit up. Alas! his head was like a heavy lump of lead which he could not lift. That he was stripped naked would have mattered little; he had a blanket, and the fellows had not taken off his shoes, so that had he got out into the street, he would have appeared bareheaded, wrapped round the body

with a rug, like a savage, yet, as to his feet, dressed in white silk stockings and silver buckled shoes. Sailors have been turned out into the street in even worse plight than this, and certainly one would rather escape naked than not at all.

So he lay, listening and watching, for two hours and more. Then the candle, which had been flickering in the socket, went out suddenly, and there was no light except a dim red glow from the dying embers in the fireplace, and the house seemed perfectly quiet.

'This,' said Jack, listening, 'looks more hopeful. If only I could sit up.'

He confessed afterwards, and was not ashamed to confess, that he was greatly moved with fear during this uncertainty of his fate, and that no action at sea could compare for dreadfulness with this helpless lying in a corner, expecting at any moment to be slaughtered like a poor silly sheep. 'For,' he said, 'if a man cannot fight, he must needs be a coward. There is no help for him. I shall never laugh at cowards more. I had no

strength left in me to make the least resistance—no, not so much as a girl. And I looked every moment to hear one of these villains stir and wake up.'

They did not stir or make the least sign of waking: but Jack heard footsteps on the stairs. 'Here comes another murderer,' he thought; 'it is now all over with me, and I shall see my Bess no more. Poor girl! Will she murder Aaron in revenge? Or will she never find out, and marry him? Oh! for ten minutes of my old strength and a cudgel!'

The extremity of his agitation gave him power to lift his head and sit upright, leaning against the wall, and looking for nothing less than immediate death.

The footsteps were those of the man in the cassock, whom they called the Parson. He carried in his hand a candle, with which he surveyed the room and the sleeping men. Then he turned to the prisoner.

'So,' he said, 'you have come to your senses, and can sit up. Do you think you can stand and walk?'

'If you mean to murder me,' said Jack, 'do it at once, without more jaw—of which we have had enough.'

'I have no such thought, sir. Murder you? Heaven forbid! Why should I murder you?'

'Then hush! or you will wake these fellows.'

'Wake them?' The Parson kicked the man who lay nearest him. 'Wake them? If the house was in flames, they would not wake up till they were half-burned. In this place, Sir, we know our business and how to doctor the drink, so as to produce as sound a sleep as is thought necessary. For instance, you may sing or dance, or do anything you please, but you shall not wake up these fellows. I have done the job for them, and they are safe for six hours and more to come.'

'What do you want with me, then?' asked Jack. 'You are one of them, and yet——'

'I am in this house for my sins and for my punishment, not for my pleasure. Ask me

no more. As for what I want with you, I am come to set you free.'

'To set me free? Is it possible?'

'Sir,' said this strange creature, 'you are astonished to find any conscience at all in such a place, which is, indeed, truly the habitation of devils. Yet I would not have your murder added to my guilt, and, upon my word, Sir, when these villains come to their senses, I believe there is no chance for you whatever. For, Sir, consider. The kidnapping of a King's officer, and the shipping of him on board an East Indiaman, is a thing which cannot fail to be discovered, and it is certainly a hanging matter. I know not what madness possessed them to attempt it. Therefore, they are mighty uneasy, and though they have put off the matter for the night, because you were senseless, and no man likes to kill another in his sleep, yet to-morrow morning, when they come to themselves and consider the dangers they are in, they will, I am certain, resolve to despatch you in order to make all sure, and then, after slashing your

face, they will lay you in some open and exposed spot, as Whitechapel Mount or the market gardens, or very likely, if it seems easier done, they will tie a stone to your feet and drop you into the river. Because, Sir, the body once out of the way, and not to be recognised, who is to prove the murder, unless one of the villains turns informer?'

To this Jack could make no reply, but still he marvelled greatly that such a man should be in such a place.

'Certain I am,' the Parson continued, 'that never man had a more narrow escape than you. And had you been conscious, or showed any signs of life, they would have brained you. Therefore I kept coming and going, because, though the house reeks with murder, I think that they would not go so far as to murder you before my eyes. But come, Sir, it is close upon early morning, and already nearly three of the clock. Rise, if you can, and dress yourself in these rags that are left out for you. Indeed, Sir, I cannot restore to you your clothes, which are downstairs, because I wish

it to appear that you have escaped by your own wit and daring. Quick, then, and put on these things.'

Then, as Jack was unable of himself to stand, this Samaritan, for he was nothing short, brought him a chair, and helped him to raise himself into it, and clothed him as if he were a child. The things which he had to put on were so old and ragged that they would scarce hold together: and they were so dirty that no ragamuffin of the street would have picked them out of the gutter; no scarecrow in the fields ever had such clothes. They consisted of nothing more than a pair of corduroy breeches, and a dirty old knitted waistcoat, both in tatters and full of holes. Nevertheless, when Jack had them on, his courage came back to him. A man feels stronger when he has put on his clothes. Also, perhaps, he was already somewhat recovered of the blow.

'I feel,' he said, 'as if I could now make some fight.'

'It needs not,' the Parson replied. 'Talk not of fighting, but lean on me, and we will

try to get down the stairs. Remember, it is your only chance to get out of the place before these fellows awake. I have, below, something that may revive you. Try now if you can stand.'

He could, though with great difficulty. Surely never was there stranger figure than Jack at this moment. The ragged waistcoat was too tight to button round his chest; the corduroy breeches were too short for so tall a man, and showed his bare knees; the white silk stockings and the silver buckles ill-assorted with a dress so sordid; and, to crown all, one side of his head, where the Parson had partly washed it, showed his natural hair, with streaks of blood upon the neck; but the other side was powdered and tied back with black ribbon. But Jack thought little of his appearance.

'Good,' said the Parson. 'Now lean your hand upon my shoulder, and we will go slowly.'

'I wish I was strong enough first to handcuff and make fast these rogues,' said Jack.

'Come, Sir, your life is at stake, and mine

too—if that mattered. Think not upon revenge.'

'Aaron,' said Jack, 'my turn will come. As for revenge, I say not. I would not kill him; but tit-for-tat is fair. Easy, Aaron; easy. You would make me prisoner, and ship me for a recruit! Very well, Aaron, very well. I shall get my turn soon! Come, Parson, if that is what you wish to be called.'

So this strange Parson supported him slowly and gently down the stairs and into the kitchen, where he found a chair for him, and set upon the table cold meat and bread, and poured from a jar a glass of rum.

'This,' he said is not drugged. 'You can drink it without fear. Yet be moderate, for you are still weak. So, now eat a little, but not much, and then you shall go away in safety. But forget not to thank God, who hath delivered you from death and from a den where murders and villainies call aloud for the vengeance which will certainly fall upon it.'

Who, thought Jack, would expect an exhortation to religion in a crimp's house?

As he ate and drank, his strength came back to him, although he still remained dizzy, and somewhat uncertain of step.

'Man,' he said, when he had taken his supper, 'who and what are you, and why do you live here among these people?'

'I came here because I am a villain, like my masters; and I stay here because, like them also, I have no other way of escaping the gallows. Is that reason enough?'

'They call you Parson; you wear a cassock; you talk like a scholar. What hath brought a scholar to such a place?'

'They may call me Bishop, if they please. I am the servant of these men. They say unto me "Go," and I go; or "Come," and I obey; if there be any greater degradation for a scholar than to live as cook and servant to fetch and carry drink for a crew of cut-throat crimps, I would fain know what it is. Methinks I would offer to exchange.'

'Why,' said Jack, 'for the matter of an exchange, you might ship as purser's mate and see how you like that; but hang me if I

understand how a clergyman should get to such a place.'

Jack now considered his rescuer more carefully. He was a young man not more than five- or six-and-twenty; his cassock was not old, but it was battered and stained with grease: his shoes had no buckles, but were tied with string and were down at heel; his wig was not one which consorted with his sacred calling, being nothing better than an old 'prentice's bob minor, short in the neck, in order to show the buckle of the stock, and as old as any of the worn-out scratches, jemmies, and bob majors which the people fish for at a penny a dip in Petticoat Lane, and even a boy who blacks boots might scorn for the purposes of his trade: but his face was delicate and handsome—a face very far from the dissolute looks of the fellows upstairs.

'Look ye, brother,' said Jack, 'you have saved my life. What can I do for thee?'

'Nothing,' the Parson replied. 'I am a lost rogue, though not, I hope, beyond the

reach of pardon, and you can do nothing, I thank you.'

'Thou hast saved my life. Damme, rogue or not, take my hand. Nay,' for the other hesitated, 'I will have it. Give me thy hand. Now, then, we are brothers. What hast thou done?'

'It is true,' he said, 'that I am an ordained clergyman of the Church of England. Unworthy that I am, I may call myself a clerk in holy orders.'

'I am in a very pretty rig for an officer in the King's service; but, hang me, if you are not in a worse for a parson.'

'Sir,' the poor man began, with hanging head, 'I lost my curacy by the death of my Rector, and I could get no other, nor any preferment at all, not even the smallest, having no interest and being unknown to any Bishop or private patron. Then I quickly spent my little stock—not, I can truthfully avow, in extravagance, or waste, or vicious courses; and I presently found that I had nothing left but one poor shilling. This I was unwilling to spend, and I

walked about the streets, picking up crusts or turnips that had been dropped into the gutter, until I became well-nigh desperate. Sir, you see before you a common footpad. Dressed as I was in the cassock of my profession, I ventured to stop a gentleman in the street, and to demand his money or his life.'

'Did he give you his money?'

'No. He turned out to be a man of courage—a thing which I had not looked for. Therefore, he drew his sword, and I fled, he running after me, crying, "Stop thief! Stop thief!" I escaped, and got home unperceived, as I thought, to my lodging. Never again shall I hear that cry without a knife piercing my heart. The next day I went to the nearest coffee-house, meditating death by my own hands. It is a terrible thing to be a suicide, but worse is it to live among these rogues. I fell in with the Captain, as they call him, the owner of this house and another like it in Chancery Lane. He, perceiving my trouble, accosted me, and presently brought me here

and gave me strong drink, under which I told him all.'

'But why do you stop here against your will?'

'Because, alas! the Hue and Cry is out after me. In some way—I know not how—the gentleman I thought to rob found means to know my name. If I venture forth I shall be arrested, and presently hanged. For that I must not complain, because the punishment might be taken mercifully in atonement for my offence. But there are others'—here he choked, and the tears came into his eyes.

He drew a paper from his pocket, and gave it to Jack. It was a piece of a Gazette.

'Last evening we hear that a robbery was attempted about ten o'clock in Chancery Lane by a man dressed as a clergyman, who stopped a gentleman and demanded his money or his life, but, being confronted by a drawn sword, ran away. The villain succeeded in escaping, but will, it is hoped, be discovered, the gentleman being confident that he knows who he is, and can swear to him.'

'How long ago was this?'

'It is now six months. I have entreated the Captain to ship me with the rest, but he will not, saying that he hath never before had in the house a servant who would neither steal nor drink.'

'Six months. Why, man, a Hue and Cry that is six months old! Courage! Tell me thy name.'

The poor man made a clean breast of all, telling him his name, and trusting him, in short, with his neck. But no one could converse with Jack, or look into his face, without trusting him. As for his name, it must not be set down. For the man who had thus sunk to the lowest ignominy was presently enabled to return to his own station and his sacred profession, no one knowing aught of what had happened. Not only did he resume his ministry, but he obtained a curacy, and in time received preferment, being now the Incumbent of a London church, and greatly beloved for his devotion, eloquence, and learning; so that it is thought by many that, if promotion goes

by merit, he may soon become a Bishop. And, since no one knows, except myself, this episode of his early manhood, let the thing remain for ever a secret.

'And now,' said the clergyman, 'the time is getting on. Go, while the way is clear. Go, Sir. And forget this vile house and the unhappy men that are in it.'

'As for forgetting the house,' said Jack, 'you shall see how I will forget the house.'

'You must go away dressed as you are, because I would not be suspected. Wherefore I shall leave the door unlocked and unbarred. Here is a cudgel for you, but you will not need it. All the rogues of Wapping—whose name is Legion—are asleep at this hour. Go then, and remember that never, even in battle, will you be nearer unto death than you have been this night.'

He opened the door, which was carefully locked and bolted, and set the prisoner free. Then leaving the door unlocked, as if it had been left so by the escaping captive, the Parson crept upstairs to his own pallet.

It was now past three o'clock in the morning, and still quite dark. The cold air made Jack shiver in his rags, but it revived and refreshed him. He looked up and down the street. There were no passengers at that hour save the market gardeners' carts, which were already lumbering along, filled with vegetables, to the markets of the Fleet and Covent Garden; the rest of the world was still sleeping. Then he surveyed the house carefully.

'Forget this house, quoth his reverence? I shall first forget Aaron Fletcher.'

It was too dark to observe particularly any distinguishing marks. There was no sign hung out. The ground floor was lower than the street, and the upper storey, which projected two feet and more, and looked as if it was going to fall at any moment, had thick bars outside the windows. 'I shall know the house again,' said Jack, 'by the bars. And now, gentlemen, sleep on and dream—I wish you pleasant dreams—until I come back, which will be, I take it, before you have yet awakened.'

CHAPTER XXI.

A RUDE AWAKENING.

ABOUT six o'clock in the morning, when, at this time of year, it is already daylight, there marched down the High Street of Wapping a company seen there often enough in the evening, when they are expected and men are prepared for them, but seldom so early. Who, indeed, expects a Pressgang at daybreak? The party consisted of a dozen sailors, armed each with a short cudgel, and a Lieutenant in command, with a drawn cutlass. With the officer walked a tall man, young, bareheaded, and strangely attired in a ragged knitted waistcoat, tattered breeches tied up with string and loose at the knees, and yet with white silk stockings, shoes with silver buckles, and, on one side only

powdered hair. The streets at this time are already full of those who are hastening to the day's work: most of the houses are open, and the maids are at the doors twirling their mops, or at the windows throwing open the shutters; or, in the more genteel houses, they are plastering the door-steps with yellow ochre.

'Twas, indeed, the Pressgang, more dreaded than revenue officers or Bow Street runners, and its appearance at this early hour caused everywhere the liveliest curiosity and the greatest consternation. Those who met them either stopped still to look after them, their faces full of apprehension, or they ran into open houses, or they fled without a word, or they turned into a side street or court, for fear of being taken for sailors. Many of those who fled were landsmen, and honest mechanics, because, when the Press is hot, it does not always respect landsmen, although the law is peremptory against taking any but sailors. This company, however, paid no heed to any, whether they ran or whether they stood, marching along without attempting to seize

them, though some of the men were Thames watermen, and others were lightermen, and some dockmen, and others mere river pirates and plunderers, or, as they call them, receivers, copemen, ratcatchers, coopers, mudlarks, light horsemen and lumpers, all of whom have been held to be sailors within the meaning of the Act.

Presently the man in rags, who seemed to be leading the party, stopped, and looked about him.

'Ay,' he said, 'I believe this to be the house. Now, my lads, steady all; for we have 'em, neat and tidy, just as if they were so many rats caught in a bag.'

As soon as the people in the street understood—this took them no long time—that the Press, out, no doubt, on some special and unusual business of the greatest importance—was actually going to visit the crimp's house, probably in search of the malingerers, deserters, or cowardly skulkers often lying there, in hope to be snug and out of the way, there was a lively curiosity. For skulkers these people

entertain a mingled curiosity and contempt—the former on account of their cunning at disguise and hiding, and the latter because, the sea being their trade, they will not bravely follow it. The workman, no longer fearful of his own safety, stopped to look on, his tools in his bag, careless if he should be late at his shop; the waterman, who, at first sight of the party, trembled for himself, stopped on his way to the Stairs where he plied, though he might thereby lose an early fare, and stood curious to see what might happen, blowing into his fingers to keep them warm: the maids came out from the house-doors and stood around, mop in hand, expressing at first their opinions of the Press, without any fear of the Lieutenant, or respect to authority—there are certainly no such enemies of good government as the women. But, when these honest girls found that the Press was not come to carry off their lovers, but in order to visit the house about which there was so much mystery, and concerning which there were told so many stories, they stopped their abuse and waited to see what

would come of it. Within those barred windows strange things were carried on. Terrible stories are told of crimps' houses. Fearful sounds had been heard proceeding from this house; shrieks and cries for mercy, and the trampling of feet! Sometimes there was singing, with laughter, and the noise of men making merry over drink; sometimes there were loud quarrels, with the noise of fighting. Those who entered this house were generally carried in; those who came out were generally carried out. It was said that sometimes those who were carried out were not drunk, but dead; and that they were not put into the boat to be shipped on board an East Indiaman, but to be dropped into the river at mid-stream, with a stone tied to their feet. Therefore, the crowd, which increased every moment, looked on with satisfaction. They might now be enabled to see, for themselves, what manner of house this was.

'I think, Sir,' said Jack to the Lieutenant in command, 'that if you would leave two men at the door, we can with the remainder

very easily dispose of the rogues in the house, whether they are awake or asleep.'

The house was not astir yet; the door was not yet opened; the shutters of the ground-floor windows were not yet thrown back. It looked, in the broad daylight, a dirty, disgraceful den; the doors and shutters black with dirt and want of paint; the windows of the upper storeys seemed as if they had never been cleaned since they had first been put up, and some of the panes of glass were broken.

'If they are awake, they will fight,' said Jack. 'But they have no pistols, so far as I could see.'

The door yielded to a push. The Parson had, therefore, left the door as if Jack had escaped by unlocking and unbarring it.

Jack led the way upstairs, and threw open the door of the room in which he had so nearly met a horrid and violent death. Behold! All the men were lying just as they had fallen, some on their faces, some on their backs, their mouths open, and breathing heavily.

The fire was out, and the air of the place was horribly close and ill-smelling.

'Here they are,' said Jack, as the Lieutenant followed him. 'Saw one ever lustier rogues? Here is a haul for you.'

'They are dressed like sailors,' said the Lieutenant, looking at them with curiosity and misgiving. 'But I doubt it. I have never known crimps' men to be sailors. Mostly this sort are riverside rogues, and to take them on board would only be to put into the fo'ks'le so many past-masters in all villainy.'

'That is true,' Jack replied, 'and I doubt they will want continual smartening from the bo's'n: and such mutinous dogs that they will at first spend half their time triced up to the gratings. Yet, if you refuse them, I must needs have them hanged; and this I am not, I confess, willing to do, because there is one other who must then hang with them. And I would not, if I could avoid it, compass his death.'

'Then I will press them,' said the Lieutenant, making up his mind. 'Ready with the handcuffs! Stand by! Handcuff every man!'

The sailors pulled them up one after the other, waking them with kicks and cuffs, and made each man safe. Thus, shaken violently out of their sleep, they stood gazing stupidly at each other, still only half awake, and not knowing what had befallen them, or where they were, or anything at all.

'Bring them downstairs, and into the open,' the Lieutenant commanded. 'Rouse up every one of them with the pump. Now for the rest of the house.'

'I believe there are no other sailors here,' said Jack; 'only two or three poor devils in hiding till they can be shipped for the East Indies.'

The men went through the house, and presently returned, bringing four or five prisoners—namely, the recruits of the Company. A most valuable addition they would have made to the Service, truly, for a more scarecrow, terrified crew could not be found anywhere. As for the 'prentice, a white-faced puny wretch, who had robbed his master's till, at the sight of the officer with a drawn sword,

and the men, their faces fierce and unrelenting, standing around, he immediately imagined that they were all come for his own arrest, and that this was the first step towards Newgate and the gallows. Wherefore he fell upon his knees blubbering.

'Alas!' he cried. 'I am a miserable sinner! I confess all. I have robbed my master. Oh! let me have mercy. Let me live, and I will pay all back! Only let me live!' And so on, as if the noose was already ready for him, and the rope hitched to the gallows.

The next was a sturdier rogue. He would have been hanged for coining false money had he been caught. But he understood that a company of sailors is not sent forth to arrest men charged with civil offences. Therefore, and in order to save his neck, he very readily volunteered, and, being a brisk, smart lad, though a rogue from childhood, and a thief, forger, coiner, and pickpocket, I dare say he turned out as good a sailor as can be expected of a landsman; and if he could not go aloft to

bend or reef a sail, he could help to man a gun and carry a pike. The third man was the deserter, who represented himself as a man milliner, and was suffered to go free, because milliners are of little use on a man-o'-war; the next was a bankrupt, once a substantial tradesman, who had ruined himself with drink and vicious courses, and came voluntarily to the crimp's to be enlisted in the Company's service, in order to escape his creditors. But his face was so puffed and purple with drink, his limbs so trembled beneath him, that I doubt whether he would have lasted the voyage. There was another, whose wife was a termagant, and extravagant to boot, and he was flying from her and from her debts. He, too, offered to volunteer, saying that he would rather dwell with the Devil than with his wife; but the Lieutenant would not have him. And another there was who was a broken gamester, a gentleman by birth, and a physician from Glasgow University, a native of Jamaica, where he had at first a good fortune, but was now fallen from his former condition, without

friends, estate, or money, and held no other hope except to take service with the Company. There were one or two others, but all of them, except the false coiner, the Lieutenant, without inquiring further into their characters or their histories, ordered to go about their business; but as for the 'prentice, who still blubbered that he was a repentant sinner, and asked permission only to live, he fetched him a box o' the ears and a kick, and bade him go his way, and be hanged.

This poor wretch, who had been torn partly with terror at the thought of going to the Indies to fight, being a desperate coward, and partly with remorse, made haste to obey the Lieutenant, and departed, and what became of him, whether he went to his master and confessed and obtained pardon, or whether he was thrown into Newgate and hanged, or whether he fell into worse courses, I know not —'the way of transgressors,' saith Holy Writ, 'is hard.'

There remained the Parson, who said nothing, but waited patiently for his fate.

'As for this man,' said Jack, laying his hand upon his shoulder, 'he is my prisoner. Leave him to me.'

This, then, was Jack's revenge. He might have seen the men swing—and they deserved nothing short of hanging—but it pleased him better to think of these fat, tender-skinned, delicate, over-fed, and drunken rogues, as cowardly as they were pampered, howling under the lash, and mutinously grumbling under the discipline of a King's ship. They were mere landsmen, who had never been to sea at all, even if they had ever been on board a ship (if they had, it was only to look for something to steal). But they had lived on the riverside all their lives, and knew the talk of sailors; and they equipped themselves—a part of their trade—in slops and round jackets, the better to decoy their victims.

The men were still so stupid with the drug they had taken that they understood nothing of what was done until they had first had their heads held under the pump for a quarter of an hour. Then they began to remember what

had happened; and, seeing their late prisoner with the party of captors, they cast rueful looks at one another, and, like the poor 'prentice, looked for nothing short of Newgate, and for the fatal cart and the ride to Tyburn—which, indeed, for this and many other crimes, they richly deserved.

It would have gone hard with Aaron had this been the destination intended for them by their victim. Nothing is more distasteful to a rogue than to hang alone, when his brother rogues have escaped. It offends his sense of justice. Perhaps, however, the going out of the world in so violent a manner, in company with an old friend, is felt to be less cold and comfortless than to go alone. But Aaron, as well as these men, was reserved for another fate.

This business despatched, and the men, now fully awake, drawn up two and two in readiness to march, Jack addressed them with great courtesy, though the sailors of the Press grinned and put tongue in cheek.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'last night your

honours were good enough to offer me the hospitality of your house; you also debated very seriously whether you should not murder me; that you did not do so is the cause why your honours are now handcuffed. You will go with these honest sailors, and you will thank me henceforth every day of your lives for my goodness in getting you impressed. Such brave lads as you will rejoice to run up aloft in a gale of wind; and the enemy's shot you will value no more than a waterman's jest. You are so smart that the bo's'n's supple-jack will never curl about your shoulders, nor his rope's-end make your fat legs jump. As to drink, I fear there has been more punch served out in this house than is good for your health; that is better ordered aboard. And it will do your honours good to see each other brought to the gangway for the cat-o'-nine-tails sweetly to tickle his fat back. Perhaps you fresh-water sailors know not the tickling of the cat. Gentlemen, you have a truly happy life before you: I wish your honours farewell.'

It was the first speech Jack ever made. If

it was not eloquent, it was to the point, and intelligible.

I do not think that the fellows understood one word of what he said, being fully possessed with the belief that they were going to Newgate and afterwards to be hanged. And when they presently found themselves taken on board the tender and shoved below deck, and understood that they were pressed for sailors, at first they grinned with joy. One who is threatened with death counts escape on any conditions, even the hardest, a thing to be welcomed with joy unspeakable. But when they discovered, after a few days' experience on board, what was meant by service at sea—a life of little ease, hard work and short time for sleep, and rough food, with the kicks and contempt which all true man-of-war's men show for lubbers, a limited ration of rum, and the necessity of immediate obedience, some of them fell into despair, and would skulk below till they were driven upwards by the bo's'n's supple-jack and the gunner's rattan, and these laid on in no stinted or niggard spirit. Some

became mutinous and insubordinate: none of them knew anything of a seaman's duties, in spite of their sailor's dress, and were useless save for the simplest work. Therefore, it naturally came to pass that, before long, one after another, they were tied up at seven bells, and soundly trounced, whereupon, their backs being soft and tender and unused to the lash, and their dispositions cowardly, and being ignorant of discipline and respect to their officers, when prayers for pity failed, they fell to cursing the captain and the lieutenants, the bo's'n, and the ship's crew, shrieking and screaming like mad women. So that they stayed where they were for another six dozen, and this admonition and instruction were repeated until they were finally made to understand that a man-o'-war is not a crimp's house, nor a tavern at Wapping, where every man can call for what he chooses, sleep as long as he pleases, and take his pleasure; but a place where work has to be done, orders must be obeyed, and punishment in default is as certain as the striking of seven bells. Whether

any of them ever returned I know not, but the house was broken up and their old occupation was destroyed, though no doubt other crimps' houses were soon established in its place.

When the Pressgang were gone there remained Jack, still in his rags, and the unlucky recruits.

'As for you fellows,' he said, 'my advice is, sheer off. This house is closed. There is no more shelter for you here. Go and hide elsewhere.'

'Where shall we go?' asked the poor gamester. 'Here at least we got meat and drink. Whither shall we go?'

They obeyed, however, and went out together, parting at the door and skulking away in different directions, perhaps to be picked up by another crimp.

'Brother,' said Jack to the Parson, 'come with me. First let me put on my own clothes, and then we will find a lodging for thee. Thou hast saved my life. Therefore, so long as I have a guinea left, thou shalt have the half.'

At first the poor man refused. He burst

into tears, declaring that kindness was thrown away upon a wretch so disgraced and degraded as himself: that it would be better for him to stay where he was, and to receive with resignation the evils which he had brought upon his own head. 'What,' he asked, 'can be done for a man for whose apprehension a reward is offered and the Hue and Cry is out?'

'Hark ye, brother,' Jack repeated: 'thou hast saved my life. If thou wilt not come with me willingly, hang me, but I will drag thee along! What! wouldst remain alone in this den? Come, I say, and be treated for thine own good. What! There was no robbery, after all. As for the Hue and Cry, leave that to me. I will tackle the Hue and Cry, which I value not an inch of rogues' yarn.'

I do not know what he understood by the Hue and Cry, or how he was going to tackle it; but being always a masterful man, who would ever have his own way, he overcame the Parson's scruples, and presently had him away and safely bestowed in a tavern at Aldgate, where he engaged a room for him,

and sent for a tailor, making the Parson put off his tattered cassock and his old wig, and sit in a night-cap and shirt sleeves until he was provided with clothes suitable to his profession, and a wig such as proclaimed it. Then Jack bade him rest quiet a day or two, and be careful how he stirred abroad, while he himself made inquiries into his case, and this matter of the Hue and Cry.

Now mark, if you please, the villainy of the man Jonathan Rayment. There never had been any reward offered for the arrest of this poor man at all; there was no Hue and Cry after him; the gentleman whom, in the madness of his despair, he had thought to rob had not followed and tracked him; nothing was known about him at all; and his friends were wondering where he was, and why he sent no letters to them. The story of the Hue and Cry and the reward was invented by Mr. Rayment, who was, I believe, eldest son to the Father of Lies, in order to keep the unhappy man in his power, so that he could use him as the servant (or a slave) of the house as long as

he pleased; or, if he thought it would be more profitable, could ship him as a recruit at any time. And while he was persuading this contrite sinner that the whole town rang with his wickedness, no one in the world knew anything about it, and there was no reason why he should not go openly to the St. Paul's coffee-house and sit among his fellow Divines. Briefly, Jack shared, half and half, all the money he had with this poor man, who presently obtained a lectureship, and afterwards a City church, and is now, as I have already stated, a most worthy, pious, devout, learned preacher; benevolent, eloquent, and orthodox, justly beloved by all his congregation; and I dare affirm, none the worse, because in his youth he experienced the temptation of poverty, was even suffered to fall into sin, felt the pangs of remorse and shame, and endured the torments of companionship with the most devilish kind of men that dwell among us in this our town of London.

So they, too, went away, Jack being restored to his own garments, though his purse, containing four or five guineas, was not in his pocket.

And now the house was empty. The crowd had broken up and gone away, but the neighbours still gathered about, talking over the strange business of the morning. Presently, they began to look in at the open door. There were no sounds or sign of occupation. Then they opened the doors of the rooms and looked curiously about them. The lower rooms were furnished with benches and tables, the wainscot walls gaping where the wood had shrunk, and the floors made brown with soot and small beer, to hide the dirt. There was a kitchen, with a pot and frying-pan and some pewter dishes, tin pannikins and some remains of food, and, which was much more to the purpose, there was a small cask of rum, three-fourths full. The neighbours made haste to taste the rum provided, being curious to discover whether it was a stronger and more generous liquor than that to which they were themselves accustomed. In a few minutes the rumour of this cask spread to right and left along the street, and everybody hastened to taste the rum, and continued to taste it, until there was no more left. It

was strong enough and generous enough to send them away with staggering legs and fuddled brains. Upstairs there were bedrooms with flock mattresses laid upon the floor, and in one room there were rings and staples and chains fixed in the wall for safely securing mutinous recruits. But all the rooms were foul and filthy.

When the neighbours went out, the boys came in and took possession joyfully, with no one to check or hinder their mischief. Never before had boys such a chance. When they left the house there was not a whole pane of glass left in the windows, nor a bench, chair, or table that was not broken, nor any single thing left that could be carried away.

Next day the 'Captain'—that is, the worthy dealer in curiosities, of Leman Street, Mr. Jonathan Rayment—himself walked over to Wapping, in order to inquire into the health and welfare of his recruits and their numbers: he was also anxious to know what had happened in the adventure with the King's officer.

You may understand his surprise and dis-

may when he found everybody gone and everything broken. They had even torn away the wooden banisters of the stairs and ripped up the wooden steps. Nothing was left at all—not even those poor helpless creatures, the 'prentice and the Parson. Where could they be?

He did not dare to ask. Something terrible had happened. As for himself, he hurried home to hide himself in his shop until the danger was over. A curse upon Aaron Fletcher, and on his own foolishness, in suffering his men to meddle with Aaron's private quarrels! And a good business now broken up and destroyed; for how could the house be carried on without his men?

He looked to hear an account of his men in the Gazette; how they were brought before the Lord Mayor and charged with highway robbery, and even sent to Newgate for trial. Strange! There was nothing. Nor did this worthy tradesman ever learn what had happened, for Aaron could tell him nothing, except that the Lieutenant had escaped; and he never

dared venture to ask in Wapping. But he lost his servants and his recruits, and for a long time the business of crimping in those parts languished.

One thing remains to be told about this eventful day. In the evening, work being over, Aaron Fletcher was sitting alone, his pipe in his mouth, in the cottage where he lived, at the gates of his boat-building yard. He was in good spirits, because the Lieutenant was reported missing. Perhaps he was dead. It would be the best thing in the world if he was dead. What then? No one could say that he had any hand in it.

'Aaron!' cried a voice he knew: 'Aaron Fletcher, open the door!'

He dropped his pipe and turned pale, and his teeth chattered. It was the Lieutenant's voice, and he thought it sounded hollow. He was dead, then, and this was his ghost come to plague him. Aaron was a man of courage, but he was not prepared to tackle a ghost.

'Aaron,' the voice repeated, 'open the

door, or I will break it in, ye murderous villain! Open the door, I say!'

Aaron obeyed, his cheeks ashy white, and his heart in his boots.

It was no ghost, however, but the Lieutenant in the flesh, tall and gallant, and apparently none the worse for the night's adventure, who walked in, followed by Mr. Brinjes. He was arrayed in his great wig and velvet coat, in honour of the Club whither he was going. This splendour added weight to the words which followed.

'Aaron,' said the Lieutenant, 'or Cain, the Murderer, if you like the name better; there was, last night, a purse in my pocket containing, as near as I can remember, the sum of five guineas and a crown. Your friends have taken it from me. Give me back those five guineas and that crown.'

'What friends? I know nothing about any friends or any five guineas! What mean you? I know nothing about the matter. It was not I that knocked you on the head, Lieutenant.'

'Why—see—you are self-convicted and

condemned! Who spoke of knocking on the head? How should you know what was done, unless you were one of them? Five guineas, Aaron, and a crown, or'—here he swore a great oath—'you go before the magistrate to-morrow with your friends the crimp's men and answer to the charge of highway robbery, and thence to Newgate. And so, in due time, to Tyburn in a comfortable cart. Five guineas, Aaron.'

He held out his hand inexorably, while Aaron trembled. This man was worse than any ghost.

'Pay the money, Aaron,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'and thank your good fortune that you have so far got off so cheap. So far, Aaron. Not that we have done with you. Look for misfortune, friend Aaron.' He said this so solemnly that it sounded like a prophecy. 'Men who get crimps to rob for them and kidnap for them cannot hope to prosper. Therefore, expect misfortune. You have many irons in the fire; you can be attacked on many sides; you build boats, you run across to the French

coast, you sell your smuggled lace and brandy. Misfortunes of all kinds may happen to such as you. But you must pay this money, or else you will swing; you will swing, friend Aaron; and when you have paid it do not think to escape more trouble. I say not that it will be rheumatism, or sciatica, or lumbago, all of which lay a man on his back and twist his limbs, and pinch and torture him. Perhaps ——but look out for trouble.'

Aaron lugged out his purse and counted five guineas, which he handed over to Jack without a word.

'What?' cried Mr. Brinjes, his eye like a red-hot coal, 'the Lieutenant forgives you, and you think you are going to escape scot-free! Not so, Aaron, not so; there are many punishments for such as you. I know not yet but you must swing for this, in spite of this forgiveness. Many punishments there are. I know not yet what yours shall be. Come, Lieutenant, leave him to dream of Newgate.'

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRIVATEERS.

THE time allowed to a sailor in which to make love is short, being no more than the interval between two voyages. (He generally makes up for brevity by the display of an ardour unknown to landsmen.) And now the hour approached when Jack must tear himself from the arms of his mistress, and go forth again to face the rude blast, the angry ocean, and the roaring of the enemy's guns. Regardless of his former sufferings, he desired nothing better than to put to sea once more; and he was not one to go away crying because there would be no more kisses for a spell.

Among the King's ships laid up in ordinary at Deptford, during the seven years' peace,

was a certain twenty-eight-gun frigate called the 'Tartar.' I know not what had been her record up to this period; but that matters nothing, because it will be allowed that she is now very well known to all French sailors, and regarded by them with a very peculiar terror. She was built on lines somewhat out of the common, being sharper in the bows and narrower in the beam than most ships. She rode deep, but she was so fast a sailer that nothing could escape her when she crowded all her canvas and gave chase; a beautiful ship she was, to my eyes, even while laid up in ordinary, with the lower-masts taken out of her, and a mere hulk.

'But,' said Jack, 'you should see such a ship sailing. What do you landsmen know of a ship, when you have never seen one running free before the wind, every inch of canvas set—studdin'-sails, flying jib, sky-scrapers, and all? You draw ships, Luke; but you have never even seen a ship at sea.'

That was true; but, on the other hand, I never attempted to draw a ship sailing on the

ocean, nor have I ever painted waves or the open sea.

'Wait till you have seen the "Tartar" in a brisk nor'-wester, her masts bending, she sailing free, answering the least touch of her helm like a live thing—for that matter, a ship at sea *is* a live thing, as every sailor knows, and has her tempers.'

Jack became enamoured, so to speak, of this vessel from the first day when he revisited the Yard and saw the carpenters and painters at work upon her, and desired nothing so much as to be commissioned to her; for it was quite certain that she would be manned and despatched as soon as they could fit her out. (At this time they were working extra hours, and from daybreak to sunset, the men drawing increased pay, and all as happy as if the war was going to last for ever.)

'She is,' he said, 'a swift and useful vessel, and wants nothing but a fighting Captain, who will not wait for the enemy, but will sail in search of him and make him fight. I would

she had such a Captain, and I was on board with him.'

He presently got his desire, as you will hear, and the ship got such a Captain as he wished for her.

Meanwhile the days passed by, and still his appointment was delayed, so that, in spite of his amour, he began to fret and to grow impatient. The great man on whose word he relied had made him a clear and direct promise from which there could be, one would think, no departing. 'Trust me, Lieutenant,' he said; 'I assure you that you shall be appointed to a ship with as little delay as possible.' Yet appointments were made daily, and his own name passed by. What should we think, I humbly ask, of a plain merchant in the City who should thus disregard a straightforward pledge? Yet what would ruin the credit of a merchant is not to be blamed in a great man. By the advice of the Admiral, Jack once attended the levée of his noble patron; but, being unaccustomed to courtiers' ways, ignorant of the creeping art, and unused to push himself

to the front, he got no chance of a word, or any recognition; though he says his patron most certainly saw him standing in the crowd; and so came away in disgust, railing at those who rise by cringing, and swearing at the insolence of lacqueys. He then made a personal application at the Navy Office, where the clerks treated him with so much rudeness and contempt that it was a wonder he did not lose his temper and chastise some of them. So that his affairs looked in evil plight, and it seemed as if he might be kept waiting for a long time, indeed, and perhaps never get an appointment or promotion. For, though the Peace Estimates had reduced the Navy from the footing of 50,000 officers and men to that of 10,000—so that, when the war broke out again, the Admiralty were wanting officers as well as men—yet, as always happens, the applicants for berths were more numerous than the berths to be given away; and the favouritism which is everywhere unhappily in vogue, at the Admiralty hath always reigned supreme.

'Of one thing,' he declared, 'I am resolved.

If I do not get my appointment before many months, I will seek the command of a privateer, or at least the berth of Lieutenant on board of one. There is, I know, no discipline aboard a privateer; the men are never flogged, and are generally a company of mutinous dogs, only kept in order by a Captain who can knock them down. But they are sturdy rascals, and will fight. I hear they are fitting out a whole squadron of privateers at Bristol; and there is a craft building at Taylor's yard, in Redriff—I saw her yesterday—which is never intended to carry coals between Newcastle and London, or sugar between Kingston and Bristol. She means Letters of Marque, my lad. Perhaps I could get the command of her. I am young, but I am a King's officer; and if you come to navigation—well, one must not boast. I will not stay at home doing nothing—what! when there is fighting? No. I must go, too, and take my luck. If they will not have me either in the King's service, or on board a privateer, or in the Company's navy, why, my lad, there is nothing left but to

volunteer and go before the mast. They would not refuse me there, I warrant, and many a poor fellow has done as much already.'

It is true that, on the reduction of the naval force, there were many unfortunate young men, chiefly among midshipmen, who saw no hope of employment, being without interest, and therefore were obliged to give up the King's service, and either to get berths on merchantmen or to take commissions in the Company's service; or even, as certainly happened to some, to volunteer for service before the mast. Some became smugglers; some—but these were chiefly officers from the disbanded regiments—became town bullies and led captains; some strolling actors, and some highwaymen. The fate of these poor fellows was much in the mouths of the young officers waiting, like Jack, for a ship, who met and talked daily at the Gun Tavern.

Fortunately, our Lieutenant was not called to embark on board a privateer, for he found a friend who proved able and willing to assist him. This was the Resident Commissioner of

the Yard, Captain Petherick, who took up Jack's case for him, and that so effectually, though I know not in what way, that he presently procured for him the appointment promised him, and which most he desired—namely, that of third lieutenant to the frigate 'Tartar,' to whom Captain Lockhart was now appointed. And he was a fighting captain, indeed, if ever there was one.

I am sure that on the day which brought him his commission, there was no happier man in Deptford than Lieutenant Easterbrook. He had now been in the service for nearly ten years, and for seven of them had been, through no fault of his own, debarred from every opportunity of distinction. Behold him, therefore, at last with his foot well on the ladder, albeit very near the lowest rung, holding His Majesty's commission as Lieutenant to H.M. frigate 'Tartar.' On that day it happened that the bells were ringing and the guns firing—to commemorate I know not what event. To Jack and to his friends it seemed as if the bells were ringing and the cannon were fired

in his honour, and to celebrate his appointment.

'As for her orders,' said Jack, 'I care little whither we are sent, because it is certain that there will be hot work to do, wherever we go. The French, they say, are strong in North American waters, and they are reported to be fitting out a great fleet at Toulon; they are also reported to be collecting troops at Boulogne and at Havre for embarkation, no doubt for the invasion of the English coast, if they pluck up spirit enough. Well, Bess, we shall be among them, never fear.'

There was, as many will remember, a great scare at this time that the French were preparing to invade us, and there were some who talked mournfully of another Battle of Hastings and of King Louis coming over to be crowned at Westminster Abbey. The smugglers (who in times of peace are hanged but in times of war are courted) reported great preparations along the French coast, though not, so far as could be learned, comparable with the gathering of men and material they made in the year

1745, when they were preparing to back up the Pretender. Nevertheless, the danger was thought to be so pressing that everything else must be neglected while the Government provided for the home defence; and the 'Tartar' (though this we knew not yet) was destined to join the Channel Fleet. Meantime, as is mere matter of history, the French very leisurely put to sea from Toulon, with the finest fleet, I think, that the world had ever seen, and had plenty of time to take Minorca. Then followed the unlucky Admiral Byng's famous engagement with the Marquis de la Galissonnière, which, though we call it an inconclusive action, the French have construed into a most glorious victory. Never can one forget the rage of the people, and the cry for revenge that rose up from every coffee-house, from every tavern, from the Royal Exchange, filled with great merchants, and the mug-house, filled with porters, and wherever men do assemble together. A bad beginning of the war it was; and all that year, except for the execution of the Admiral, we had nothing to cheer us. Even this, though

a sop for the rage of the nation, was a poor consolation, because no sooner was it done than men began to ask themselves whether, after all, the Admiral had not done his duty. There were floods of epigrams and verses written, it is true, both upon Byng and De la Galissonnière—if they may be considered a consolation. In time of defeat and disgrace, the soul is soothed, at least, when something biting has been said upon the cause or author of the shame. This is an art greatly practised by the French, who have always found in its exercise a peculiar satisfaction for their many disgraces both by sea and land, and for the loss of all their liberties. And for the sake of a good epigram they are said to go cheerfully even to the Bastille.

At this time, besides the preparations for invasion, which were perhaps exaggerated, the Channel swarmed with French privateers, and these full of courage and spirit. At the first outset, and until we had taught them a lesson or two, they were bold enough to attack anything, without considering disparity of numbers,

that flew the English flag. Had the French King's Navy been handled with as much resolution as these privateers, commanded and manned often by simple fishermen, the result of the war might have been very different. They put to sea in vessels of all kinds: nothing came amiss for a craft of war with Letters of Marque when these rogues first went a-privateering; nothing, in their earliest flush of success, seemed too small or too badly armed for a venture against the richly laden, slow-sailing English merchantmen, which, taken by surprise, offered at the beginning of the war, it must be confessed, but a cowardly resistance. Again, nothing was too big to be fully manned and equipped. Every craft that lay in the ports, from Dunquerque to Bordeaux, became a privateer, from a simple fishing-smack, a fast-sailing schooner, an unarmed sloop carrying two or four six-pound carronades and thirty or forty men, to a tall frigate of thirty guns, well gunned, and manned by three hundred sturdy devils, emboldened by the chance of plunder, and eager to attack everything, from an East

Indiaman to a potato coaster. Very good service was done during the course of this war by our own privateers, of whom there were presently a great many, though it must be owned that the French beat us both for the number of their piratical craft and their success. Certainly, they had a better chance, since for every French merchantmen there are fifty English. We were always capturing their privateers, but their number never seemed to lessen, however many lay in our prisons. Why, in one year—I think it was the year 1761—we took no fewer than 117 privateers, manned by 5,000 sailors; yet, in the same year, in spite of our conquests, we lost over 800 merchantmen, taken from us by these hornets swarming under our very noses.

'Kiss me, Bess,' said Jack; 'we sail on Sunday, or Monday at latest. Kiss me again, my girl. Our orders have come. We join the Channel Fleet, where there will be rubs for some, as is quite certain.'

'Among the privateers, Jack?' Bess was

as brave a girl as any—yet she shuddered, thinking of this dangerous service, in which one has not to take part in a great battle once in the cruise, and so home again to brag about the broadsides and the grape-shot, but to fight daily, perhaps, and always with a desperate crew, whose only chance is victory or escape. 'Well'—for his eyes clouded at the first appearance of fear in her face—'if thou art happy, Jack, then will I try to be happy too. Alas! why cannot women go into battle with their lovers? I could fire a pistol, and I think I could thrust a pike with any who threatened thee, Jack. But we must still sit at home and wait.'

'Now you talk nonsense, Bess. Do you think I could fight with thee at my side? Why, I should tremble the whole time, lest a splinter should tear thy tender limbs. Nay, my dear; sit at home and wait, for there is nothing else to do. And sometimes think of thy lover. Let me read the future in thine eyes.' She turned them to him obediently, and as if the future really could be read in those great

black eyes. 'I see, my dear, a sailor coming home again, safe and sound, prize-money in his pocket, promotion awaiting him. His girl waits for him at home. He rushes into her arms and kisses her—thus, my dear, and thus, a thousand times. Then he buys her a house as fine as the Admiral's, and furnishes it for her with his prize-money; and there is a garden for salads and for fruit. She shall eat off china—no more pewter then. She will have the finest pew in church and the most loving husband at home, and—what? I see a dozen boys and girls; and every boy in His Majesty's service, and every girl married to a sailor. There shall be no woman in the world handsomer or happier. Give me a kiss again, my dear.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SAILOR'S CHARM.

THAT evening Bess did a thing which is forbidden by the Church; in what part of the Prayer-Book I do not know, but I have always understood that it is prohibited as a grievous sin. She went to seek the advice of a witch.

The sailors and their wives sometimes importuned Mr. Brinjes to bestow upon them, or to sell them if he would, some kind of charm or amulet, either to maintain constancy in separation (this charm, though largely in request, is, if all reports are true, of small efficacy), to prevent drowning, against incurring the wrath of the captain, and punishment by the cat-o'-nine-tails, against being killed or wounded in action, and against hanging: which may happen

to any, though there are fewer sailors hanged than landsmen. Sometimes, if he was in good temper, or if the applicant was a young woman of pleasing appearance, Mr. Brinjes would consent, and send her away happy, with something in a bag which he called a charm. Whether he himself believed in his charms I know not, but there are still living some who declare that they have escaped hurt or drowning wholly through the efficacy of the apothecary's charm. Yet if a man hath this power, why should he not be so patriotic and benevolent as to extend it over the whole of His Majesty's Navies, so that not a sailor among them all should ever be shot, drowned, flogged, or cast away? It is like the arrogance of the Papist priests, who profess to be able to forgive sins. Why not then forgive at once, both great and small, mortal and venial, all that the world, living or dead, hath committed, and so make mankind whole? Whatever his belief concerning his own powers, Mr. Brinjes, without doubt, entertained a high respect of those of Castilla's black nurse Philadelphy—a true witch if ever there was one.

'I know not,' my father once said on this subject, 'whether the practice of magic hath in it anything real, or whether the whole is imposture and superstitious credulity. The Bible doth not teach us clearly one way or the other. Yet, by implication, we may understand that the arts of sorcery were in old times practised successfully, otherwise there would not have been promulgated commandments so express against those who work hidden arts, practise divination, inquire of a familiar spirit, consult the dead, or fabricate charms. And certainly it hath been the belief in all ages, and among every race of whom we have knowledge, that power may be magically obtained by men whereby they may compel the help of demons and spirits, and in some way foretell the future. Nebuchadnezzar divined with arrows; the false prophets deceived the people with amulets; the Bene Kedem, the Chaldeans, the Philistines, and the Chosen People in their backsliding worked hidden arts; Pharaoh's magicians turned their rods into serpents; Rachel carried away his Teraphim from her father, Laban. What

forbids us to believe that sorcery may still be living in our midst, though lurking in dark corners for fear of the law and of the righteous wrath of pious men?'

The old negro woman knew, of a certainty, many secrets, whether they were those of the Black Art or no. Mr. Brinjes would talk to her in her own Mandingo language, which he had acquired while on the West Coast of Africa. She it was who assisted him in the compounding of those broths which used to simmer on his hob, to be tasted by the shuddering assistant. By these and other secrets of which he was always in search, and forced the woman to reveal by terror of his magic stick with the skull, he hoped to cure disease, to arrest decay, and to prolong life. I suppose that it was by conversation with him that Bess was led to consider Philadelphy as much wiser in witchcraft than Mr. Brinjes. Therefore, she resolved to consult her, and went to her that very evening with all the money she had in the world—namely, a crown-piece and a groat.

The negroes of the Admiral's household occupied quarters of their own, built for them without the house, in West Indian fashion, containing a common kitchen and sleeping-rooms. Here Bess found three of the men, one of them being on guard, with the old woman. They were squatted on the floor, in the kitchen, round a dish containing their supper—a mess of cuscoosoo, which is made of flour roasted by some art, in small grains, and served with salt fish, onions, red pepper, and butter; a strong-tasting food, but not displeasing to the palate nor unwholesome. Every race has its own dish. The Spaniards have their olla podrida; the Hindoos, their rice; the Chinese, their birds'-nest soup and dried sea-slugs; and the Mandingoes, their cuscoosoo. There was no other light in the room than the glow of a great coal fire which these negroes love to have burning all the year round, and in the winter never willingly leave. As for candles, why should negro servants have luxuries which poor white folk cannot afford to buy? Candles are for those who wish to read, play music, cards, and practise the polite ac-

complishments; not for those who sit about the fire for warmth.

'Hi!' said Philadelphy, looking up curiously, ''tis Bess, the Penman's girl.'

'I want to speak with you, Philadelphy,' said Bess.

The old woman nodded, and the men rose, took up the dish of cuscoosoo and retired, as if they were accustomed to these consultations, and knew that their absence was expected. A witch must, in fact, be quite alone with those who inquire of her.

When they were gone, the old woman crept closer to the fire, the light of which seemed to sink into her skin, and there to become absorbed (the blackness of Philadelphy's cheeks not being shiny, as is that of some negresses, but dull); while her eyes shone by the firelight like two balls of fire.

'What is it, dearie?' she asked. 'Is thy lover inconstant?'

'How do you know I have a lover?'

'It is written on thy face and in thine eyes, dearie.'

'I have come for a charm,' she replied, blushing to think that she carried her secret written on her face so that all could read.

'Hush! The Admiral, he say, "No charms here, Philadelphy." Whisper. What kind of charm? Is it a charm to make thy sweetheart love thee?'

'He loves me already.' Bess hesitated a little. Then she added, 'He is a sailor. I want a charm for a sailor.'

'I sell very fine charm—proper gri-gri charm. Eh! When Massa Brinjes wants pow'ful charm for gout and toothache he sends for Philadelphy, and puts his skull-stick on the table. Then I give him what he wants. I got charm for most everything. Massa Brinjes very good Obeah Doctor: he learn in Mandingo country when he live among the rovers. Hi! Fine times the rovers had before they were all hanged up. Hi! But he dunnow so much as ole Philadelphy. When he want to learn mus' come to de ole woman. Hi!' As she spoke, her eyes rolling about so that the whites in the firelight were glowing red, she held out her

hand for the money, but went on talking and asking questions without waiting for a reply. 'Mus' come to de ole woman. Everybody come to de ole woman. Some day I die—what you do then? Hi! What kind of charm you want? I sell very fine charm. Will you buy charm for true love? Once your man get that charm upon him he can't even look at another woman. That charm make all other women ole and ugly. Hi! Tell me, dearie, will you have that charm? I sell charm again' drowning—no man drown with my charm on him. Will you buy that charm? I sell charm again' shot and sword. No man ever killed who carry my charm. I sell charm to bring him home again. Hi! You like your sweetheart come home again? How much money you got for de ole woman, dearie?'

'I've got a crown and a groat. Is that enough?'

'Give it to me!' She clutched the money greedily. 'S'pose you rich lady, too little. S'pose you poor girl, 'nuff for kind ole Philadelphy.'

'Will the money buy all the charms?'

'Buy all?' The old witch laughed scornfully. 'She think she a queen, this girl, for sure. Buy all? Dearie, if your crown and your groat was a bag of golden guineas you couldn't buy but only one charm.'

'Then, if I can only have one, which shall it be?'

'Take the love charm, dearie. That the best for eb'ry girl.'

'No,' said Bess, proudly, 'I will not buy a love charm. If my sweetheart cannot remain constant without a charm to keep him, I want no more of him. Well . . . . then . . . . he might be drowned. But he has passed through so many dangers already that I do not think he will ever be drowned. He might be killed in action. Let him come home safe and sound, whether he loves me or not. Yes; I will have the charm against killing and wounding.'

'Most girl',' said the old woman, 'rather see their sweethearts die than be false.'

'I will have the charm against shot and cutlass,' said Bess.

'Very well. I make fine gri-gri—pow'ful charm. Hi! charm to turn aside every bullet. You wait.'

Then the old woman rose slowly, being, in spite of her magic powers, unable to charm away her own rheumatism, and fumbled in her pocket, a vast sack hanging beneath her dress, which contained as many things, and as various, as a housewife's cupboard. From the rubbish lying in its vast recesses she produced a small leather bag, apparently empty, tied with a long string, which, after securing the bag with half a dozen knots, was long enough to be slipped round the neck. To untie these knots and to open the bag was to destroy the whole charm. More than this, it was to invite the very danger which was sought to be averted. Two or three years afterwards I was present when the bag was opened. It contained nothing more than a small piece of parchment, inscribed with certain characters, which I believe to have been Arabic, and very likely a verse of the False Prophet Mohammed's book, the Koran; there was the head of a frog, dried; the leg-bone of some

animal, which may have been a cat or a rabbit; the claw of some wild creature, a nutmeg, and a piece of clay. This was a famous collection of weapons to interpose between a man's body and a cannon-shot.

'Take the bag in your hand,' said the old woman. 'Now go down on your knees and shut your eyes, and take care not to open them whatever you hear or feel, while you say the words after me—

> Shot and bullet pass him by;
> Pike and cutlass strike in vain;
> Keep him safe though all may die;
> Bring my sweetheart home again.'

Bess did as she was commanded, holding the bag in her hand, and keeping her eyes tightly closed, while she repeated these words on her knees. She declared afterwards that while she said the words there was a rushing and whirling of the air about her ears and a cold breath upon her face, and, which was strange, though she held the bag tightly by the neck, she felt that things were being dropped inside it.

'Now, honey,' said the old woman, 'gri-gri done made. You open eyes, and stand up.'

So Bess obeyed, looking about her, fearfully. But there was nothing to see, and the old woman was now crouching beside the fire again. But the bag, which had been empty when she took it in her hand, was now filled with something.

'Give your lover,' said Philadelphy, 'this bag. Hang it round his neck. And say the words again, with your eyes shut and his as well. Let him never take it off or look inside it, or tell anybody of it. Hi! you very fine girl, for sure; yet sometimes men go away and forget. Hi! Den you fly roun' like a wild cat in a trap. Well, dearie, come to me s'pose he does go untrue. I make beautiful figure for girls when sweethearts prove false: put them fo' the fire, an' stick pins into him. Den he all over pain.' Bess told me that she thought of Aaron, and of a way to punish him; but, fortunately, she had no more money, else I fear that Aaron would have passed a bad winter.

When she had the charm, the old woman offered to tell her for nothing, by several methods, the fortune of her lover. All her methods led to surprising results, as you shall hear; and then Bess went away, carrying with her the precious bag. The next thing was to persuade Jack into putting it on. Now, every sailor is full of superstition; and the bravest man afloat is not above carrying a charm if one is given to him. But, of course, he would not have it known.

'Jack,' said Bess, 'don't be angry with me for what I have done.'

'What have you done, child?'

'I've been . . . . I've been—Jack—to a witch. Oh! a real witch! But she does not know your name or anything about you. And I've got a charm for you! Here it is!' She lugged the precious thing out of her bosom. 'No, Jack; don't touch it yet. You must never try to open it or to find out the secret of what is inside it, or else the charm will be broken. And, Jack—promise me—promise me—— If you will wear this round your

neck, close to your skin, you shall never be hit by shot nor shell.'

Jack laughed: but he took the little black bag out of her hand, and looked at it doubtfully.

'Why,' he said, 'as for such a trumpery thing as this—is it worth the trouble of hanging it about one's neck?'

'I might have had a charm to keep you safe from drowning, Jack; but I thought that you have had so many dangers already that there can be no more for you. And I might have had one to keep you true to me; but oh! Jack, what good would it do to me if you are true only to be killed? Besides, if you cannot keep true to me without a charm, you cannot love me as you say you do—yes, Jack, I know you do. I scorn witchery to keep my lover true.'

'A lock of thy hair, Bess, is all I ask. I will tie that round my wrist. 'Twill be quite enough to keep me true, and to save me from drowning, and to turn aside the bullets.'

There is, indeed, a common superstition

among sailors that a lock of their mistress's hair tied round the wrist will carry them safely through the action.

'You shall have a lock of my hair as well, Jack. Oh! you should have it all if I thought it would keep you safe. Only let me hang this round your neck. There: now I take off the cravat and unbutton the shirt, and drop it in—so. Shut your eyes, and keep them shut, while I say—

> Shot and bullet pass him by;
> Pike and cutlass strike in vain;
> Keep him safe though all may die;
> Bring my lover home again.'

No phenomena attended this incantation.

'And now, Jack,' Bess said, 'you can open your eyes again. Cannon shot shall not harm thee; bullet shall turn aside; sword and pike shall not be able to do my dearie hurt.'

''Tis woman's foolishness, Bess. Yet have I heard strange stories about these old negresses. They are sold to the Devil, I believe. The charm can do no harm, if it do no good. One would not go into action with

an advantage over one's shipmates. Yet it is well to be on the safe side; no man knows what power these old women may have acquired; and every man has his true-love knot for a charm. Well, Bess, to please thee, my dear, I will wear it.'

'Then, Jack, I can let thee go with a lighter heart. When the wind blows I shall tremble, but not when I hear of sea-fights and the roaring cannon.'

'Some men carry a Testament,' said Jack. 'Many a bullet has been stopped by a Testament, which is natural, as against the Devil and all his works, of which the Frenchman and the Spaniard are the chief. Some of them carry a caul to escape drowning. But they commonly get shot; though why a caul should attract the bullets, or whether it is better to be shot or drowned, I know not. But give me a true-love knot, my girl, to keep me safe, with a lock of thy black hair to tie about my arm, and a kiss of thy dear lips for charm to keep me true. And tell no one about this charm of the black witch.'

She let down her long and beautiful hair, which fell below her waist, and cut off a lock three feet long. Then Jack bared his arm—why, the love-sick lad had tattooed it all over with the name of Bess. There was Bess between an anchor and a crown, Bess between two swords, Bess under a Union Jack—well, there could be no denying, for the rest of his life, his vows of love for Bess. She laughed to see these signs of passion, and tied her lock of hair round and round his arm, securing the two ends tightly with green silk. With this, which is every woman's amulet, and the old witch's charm, surely her Jack would be safe.

In everything that followed Jack continued to wear this charm about his neck both by day and night. It is, we know, most certain that this superstition concerning amulets is vain and mischievous. How can a witch by any devilry preserve a man from lead and steel? How can a leopard's claw and a verse from a so-called sacred book stand between a man and the death that is ordered for him? To think this is surely grievous sin and folly. Besides, it is

strictly forbidden to have any doings with witches; and what was forbidden to the people of old cannot be lawful among ourselves. Yet one cannot but remark, as a singular coincidence, that in all his fighting Jack had never a wound or a scratch. Perhaps, however, his escape had nothing to do with the gri-gri.

'When I had gotten the charm,' the girl went on, 'I asked Philadelphy to tell my sweetheart's fortune. So she said she would read me his fortune for nothing, and she drew the cards from her pocket, and spread them out upon the table, and began to arrange them. Then she pushed all together and began again. Then she told me she would go no further until I told her who was my sweetheart, because she saw an officer with a sword.'

'Go on,' said Jack.

'Oh! It is wonderful! I told her he was a sailor; but as for his name, that mattered nothing. So she began again, and told me. The fortune began so well that it was marvellous; and then she stopped and mumbled some-

thing, and said that there was a coil which she did not understand, but she thought she saw—she said she thought she saw—the Devil, Jack, and herself as well. And she could not read the fortune because she could not understand any word of it. But it was the most surprising fortune in the world, whether good or bad. Then she asked me to look in her eyes, and she would read my own fortune there. Can you read my fortune there, Jack?'

'I see two Lieutenants of His Majesty's Navy in those eyes, Bess. Is that fortune enough for you? One in each eye. Is not that enough for a girl?'

'They are but one, my dear,' she said.

'And what was the fortune that she told you, Bess?'

'She said, "Come what may come, thou shalt marry thy lover." So I am satisfied. Come what may come. What care I what may come?—oh! what can come that will harm me?—so that I keep the man I love? What more can I desire? What more can I ask?

I am so poor that I can lose nothing. Fortune cannot hurt me. And come what may come, I shall keep the man I love. You will come back to me, Jack, and I shall have—oh! I shall have—my heart's desire.'

It was on Saturday morning that the ship dropped down the river with wind and tide, her company and armament complete, new rigged, new painted, fresh and sweet as a lady just from her dressing-room, while the cannon roared the parting salute. I remember that it was a misty morning in December, a light south-west breeze, and the sun like a great red copper pan or round shield in the sky. And as the ship slowly slipped down Greenwich Reach the shrouds and the sails shone like gold, and were magnified by the mist.

The Admiral stood on the quay with Castilla, and with them Mr. Brinjes.

'Go thy way, Jack,' said the old sailor. 'Go thy way, and do thy duty. Castilla, my dear, there is only one good thing for a man—'tis to sail away from the land of thieves and

land-sharks, out into blue water to fight the French.'

'And what is good for a woman, Sir?'

'Why, my child, to marry the man who goes to sea. Farewell, Jack! Maybe we shall never see thee more. Let us go home, Castilla.'

I went on board, an hour before they sailed. Jack could do no more than whisper a word as he held me by the hand. Oh! Heavens! my heart leaps up within me, even now, as I remember those eyes of his, so full of love and tenderness. 'Take care of her, Luke'—this was what he said—'take care of her until I come home to marry her. My pretty Bess! 'Tis a loving heart, Luke. She is thy charge, lad. Good-bye, dear lad, good-bye!'

I knew that she must be sitting in the old summer-house waiting to see the ship go by; and there, indeed, I found her. Jack parted with her early in the morning. I know not what passed between them; but it was surely very moving, because no pair loved each other more deeply than these two.

'He is gone,' she said. 'It is all over. But he loves me. Oh! I am sure he loves me. Yet something will happen. Philadelphy saw the Devil and herself. Between the two something is sure to happen. Oh! we shall never be so happy again together—never again.'

'Why,' I told her, 'people always think that the future can never be like the past. There are plenty of happy days before you, Bess. Jack will come home again sometime, maybe a First Lieutenant—who knows?—or a Captain in command. Then we shall have peace, I suppose, once more, and Jack will remain ashore, and you will be his wife.'

'Yes. What did Philadelphy say? Come what may come, thou shalt marry thy lover. Oh! I am not afraid. I saw him on the quarter-deck as the ship sailed past. Oh! he is the bravest and the handsomest man in all the King's service; and who am I that he should love me? Luke, you know how ladies talk and what they say. Teach me that way. Oh! Luke, teach me, so that he shall never be

ashamed of his sweetheart. My Jack! my sailor Jack! Steel nor lead shall not harm him; but the ship may wreck or sink. Oh! my heart, my heart! When shall I see thy dear face again?'

CHAPTER XXIV.

AFTER JACK'S DEPARTURE.

WHEN Jack was gone I suppose that Deptford remained just as full of noise and business as before. As much hammering went on in the Yard: there was as much piping and shouting on the river; there was as much drinking and bawling in the town. But to some of us the place seemed to have become suddenly and strangely quiet. Our Lieutenant had been ashore three or four months in all, yet he filled the town with his presence, a thing which only strong and masterful men can do. Most of us when we go are not missed at all, and our places are quickly filled up, whether we sail away to sea upon a cruise or are carried to the grave.

Whoever is absent, the events of the days continue to follow each other and to occupy the minds of those who wait at home. 'Twas a stirring time, and though others, and worse, have followed, and we are even now in a great war, the issue of which no man can predict, it seems to me that those years were more full of interest than any which have followed. Why, one remembers even the things that are most readily forgotten: how, for instance, the 'Speedwell' yacht moved against wind and tide, and beat four miles an hour; how four tradesmen of the City were in a pleasure-boat off Margate when they were picked up by a French privateer and ransomed for three hundred and twenty pounds; how the wounded soldiers were brought home and carried through the town in waggons; how the recruits quartered in the Savoy mutinied, and were quickly shot down; how Mary Walker, of Rotherhithe, was barbarously murdered and her niece hanged for the crime (though there were many who wept for the poor girl, and believed her protestations of innocence, which she continued, with cries

and tears, to the very end); how seventy men of the 'Namur' walked all the way from Portsmouth to the Admiralty to complain of their rations, and fifteen were hanged for punishment; and how—a thing which pleased me much—there was a great sale of pictures, at which a Claude Lorraine fetched as much as a hundred guineas, a Correggio £40, a Rubens £79, and a Raphael over £700. But these are now old stories, though then they made talk for the world.

Bess, keeping mostly at home, applied herself diligently to acquire the arts of reading and writing, so that her lover might never be accused of marrying an illiterate woman. These arts, mastered even in childhood with great difficulty and painful labour, are far more difficult to acquire after one has arrived at maturity. By great patience, however, Bess so far succeeded that, after two years' application, she was able to make her way slowly through a page of large and clear print, leaving out the hard words. This achievement satisfied her, because she was not in the least degree curious concern-

ing the contents of books, and did not desire information on any subject whatever. She also learned to write her own name, her father teaching her; 'twas, I remember, in a fine flowing hand, with flourishes after the Penman's style; but she could write nothing else, nor could she ever read the written character. To one who considers the ignorance of such a girl as Bess, who neither reads nor writes, doth not hear the talk of exchanges and coffee-rooms, and has never been to school, her mind must seem a state of darkness indeed. The whole of the world's history, except that portion of it which is connected with our Redeemer, is entirely unknown to her. Geography, present politics, the exact sciences, the fine arts, poetry, and letters—all these things are words, and nothing more, to her. Such was this girl's ignorance, and such was her apathy as regards knowledge, that she desired to learn nothing except what would please her sweetheart. With this end in view she used to lay out the charts on the apothecary's table, and would make Mr. Brinjes tell her about all the ports at

which Jack had touched and the seas over which he had sailed. 'I love Jack,' was all the burden of her song. He was never out of her mind: the world might go to wrack and she would care nothing if only her lover remained in safety and was brought back to her arms.

She begged me to tell her what other things, if any, a gentlewoman generally learns, so that she might teach herself these things as well. Willingly would I have done this, but on inquiry I could not discover anything—I mean any serious study—which was necessary or possible for her to undertake. I knew but one gentlewoman with whom to compare Bess. This was Castilla. Certainly, Castilla had commenced the study of the French language; but I know not how far she advanced, and I have not learned that she was ever able to read a book in that tongue. Then, in the matter of arts and sciences, Castilla was certainly as ignorant as Bess. And when I came to consider the subject, I could not discover that she was any fonder than Bess of reading or

more desirous to extend her knowledge by means of books. There are, it is true, certain accomplishments in which a young gentlewoman is instructed. Castilla had learned to dance, and in the Assembly there were none who performed a minuet with more grace, though some perhaps with more stateliness, because she was short of stature. In a country dance she had no equal. But Bess, for her part, who had never been taught by any dancing-master, could dance a jig, a hay, or a hornpipe, rolling like a sailor, snapping her fingers, and singing the while, so as to do your eyes good only to see the unstudied grace and spirit of her movements. Then Castilla had been taught the harpsichord, and could play at least three, if not four, tunes. But Bess had never even seen a harpsichord, and as she did not possess one she could not be taught to play upon it. Then, there is singing. Nothing is more pleasant to the ear than the singing of a beautiful woman. Castilla had a low voice, but it was sweet and musical; she had been taught to sing by the same master who had taught her the harpsi-

chord, and she could sing several songs. To please my father, she used to sing, 'Drink to me only with thine eyes'; to please the Admiral she sang, 'To all you ladies now on land'; to please me she sang, 'Sweet, if you love me, let me go'; and all so charmingly, never dropping a note, making no mistakes in word or tune, and with such grace of voice and pretty gentle way that it ravished those who heard her. But as for Bess, she had a full rich voice, and she sang out loud, so that she might have been heard half-way across the river. She knew fifty songs, and was always learning new ones. She would listen to the ballad-singer in the street, and to the sailors bawling in the taverns, and would then go away and practise their songs by herself till she was perfect. She sang them all to please Jack; but after he was gone she sang no more—sitting mum, like a moulting canary-bird. It was pretty to listen while she sang, sitting with one hand upon Jack's shoulder, and the other clasped in his lovesick fingers—

The landlord he looks very big,
With his high cocked hat and his powdered wig ;
Methinks he looks both fair and fat,
But he may thank you and me for that.
For oh ! good ale, thou art my darling,
And my joy both night and morning.

Or, sometimes, 'Why soldiers, why, should we be melancholy, boys?' or, 'Come all ye sailors bold, lend me an ear.' Another was a plaintive ditty, the choice of which we may believe to have been inspired in some prophetic mood—

Early one morning, just as the sun was rising,
I heard a maid sing in the valley below :
'Oh ! don't deceive me. Oh ! never leave me.
How could you use a poor maiden so ?'

As regards housewifery, Castilla could make conserves, cakes, puddings, and fruit-pies, and she could distil strong waters for the still-room. Bess, for her part, could make bread, pies of all kinds, including sea-pie, onion pie, salmagundy, and lobscouse ; she could cook a savoury dish of liver, lights, and bacon, of beefsteak and onions, of ducks stuffed ; she could make tansy puddings, and many other pleasant things for dinner. She could also brew beer, and had many

secrets in flavouring it with hops, ivy-berries, yewberries, and other things. As for needle-work, Castilla could, it is true, embroider flowered aprons, and do Turkey work, and tent-stitch, work handkerchiefs in catgut, and such pretty things. But Bess could knit stockings for her father or herself; she made her own frocks and trimmed her own straw hats. As to playing cards, Castilla knew a great many games, such as Quadrille, Whist, Ombre, Pope Joan, and Speculation; but Bess, for her part, could play All-fours, Put, Snip-snap-snorum, Laugh-and-lie-down, and Cribbage. Then, but this signified little, Castilla collected shells, which were brought to the house by sailors, and made grottoes; she could also cut out figures, and even landscapes, in black paper; she could make screens by sticking pictures on paper; and she knew several pretty girls' games, such as Draw-gloves, and Questions and Command. Bess knew none of these little accomplishments, and as for games, she loved best the boys' sports, such as Tagg and Thrush-a-thrush, which she used to play with Jack and

me when we were young. The chief difference, so far as I could understand, in the education of the two girls, was that one could carry a fan, manage a hoop, and behave after the manner of gentlewomen, which the other could not do. And I could not recommend Bess either to put on a hoop, or to buy a fan, or to powder and paint, or to lay on patches, by all of which things she would have made herself ridiculous.

There are some things, however, which cannot be learned. Such are sweetness of disposition, that finer kind of modesty which belongs to gentle breeding, grace of carriage, respect to elders, and the equal distribution of favours and smiles, so as not to show too openly the secret preferences of the heart. In all these things Bess was naturally inferior to Castilla, and these, unfortunately, I could not teach her, nor could Mr. Brinjes.

I could therefore advise her nothing but to study at every opportunity, and especially in church, the carriage and demeanour of the quality and the fashion of their dress, which I

recommended her to adopt at such a distance as her means and station would allow.

You may be sure that there were many at Deptford who waited anxiously for news of the 'Tartar'—most of the crew belonging to the town, and none of them being pressed men, but all volunteers, who took the King's bounty. But for three or four months we heard nothing. Then news came to the Dockyard, and was taken to the Club in the evening by the Resident Commissioner.

'Admiral,' he said, 'and gentlemen all, I bring you good news. 'Tis of the "Tartar."'

'Good news?' cried the Admiral. 'Then the boy is well. Bring more punch, ye black devil!'

'The "Tartar" has put into Spithead with a thumping prize. Twelve men killed, and the master and mate. Twenty wounded; but only the Second Lieutenant among the officers, and he slightly.'

'This is brave hearing, gentlemen,' said the Admiral.

'The prize is a privateer from Rochelle, 20 guns and 170 men. She made, it is reported, a gallant resistance. No doubt, we shall have further particulars by private despatches.'

In two days there came by the post two letters, both from Jack. One of these was for the Admiral, which I do not transcribe, although I was privileged to read it; and another, for me. I knew very well that the letter was not for me, but for another. Wherefore I made an excuse for not opening it before the company, and carried it off to Mr. Brinjes, where I found Bess sitting, as was her wont in the afternoon.

'I have heard,' she said, 'that there has been fighting on board the "Tartar." The people in the town are talking about it.'

'Jack is safe, and the "Tartar" has taken a prize, Bess; and here is a letter.'

So I tore it open in her presence. It was exactly as I thought. That is to say, there were a few words directing me to give the inclosed packet to his dear girl, the mistress of his heart; and she very joyfully received it,

snatching it out of my hands with a strange jealousy, as if she grudged that anybody should have in his hands, even for a minute, what belonged to her and was a gift from her lover. It was the same with everything, down to the smallest ribbon which Jack gave her—she could not bear that another should so much as touch it, even a man. As for a woman being allowed to look at her lover's gifts—well, it was a jealous creature, but she loved him.

First, like a mad thing, she fell to kissing the letter. 'Oh!' she cried, holding it with both hands, but kindly permitting me to scent its fragrance, which was, to say the truth, like a mixture of bilge-water, lamp-oil, cheese, rum, and gunpowder. 'Oh, it actually smells of the ship!' In fact, the letter, no doubt from having been written on paper long kept below with the purser's stores, smelt of that part of the ship where the stores are kept. 'It is just like violets,' she added; but the smell of Jack's ship was better to her than that of any violets. And so she kissed it again.

'Shall we read it?' I said. 'The letter, I

suppose, was meant to be read as well as to be kissed.'

She gave it to me reluctantly. I do not think she wanted to know the contents. Enough that Jack had written her a letter. What greater proof of love could be given to any girl?

'Do you think he *wanted* it to be read?' she asked. 'Wouldn't he be contented if he knew that I had it safe and was keeping it next to my heart, against his coming home?'

'You are a fool, Bess,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'let Luke read it. Why, the letter will tell us all about the fighting. Why else should he take the trouble to write a letter at all? Do you think a man likes writing letters? As for me, I never received a letter in my life, and I never wrote one.'

She gave up the letter with a sigh. If she had been able to read it herself, no one else would have seen it.

'Jack having taken so much trouble,' Mr. Brinjes continued, ''twould be disrespectful not

to read it. What he writes to you, my girl, he writes for me as well.'

'Mistress of my heart,' I began, reading the letter. 'Is that meant for you, Mr. Brinjes?'

'Except a word or two just to show that he hasn't forgotten you, Bess, of course. Why, as for that, such words mean nothing except that the boy is in love. I've known a man so bewitched with love as to call a half-naked black wench his goddess and his nymph. Yet it seemed to please the girl. Go on, Luke.'

'Mistress of my heart'—while I read, Bess sat in the window seat, her hands clasped, her eyes soft and melting, her breath caught short and quick, and continually interrupting with ejaculations—such as, 'Oh, Jack!' and 'Oh, my brave boy!'—wrung from her heart by the joy of loving and being loved. But these I omit.

'Mistress of my heart and queen of my soul! My dearest Bess,—Since I sailed from Deptford, I have thought of you every day and every night. If I were by your side I should give you a thousand hugs and kisses. There

never was a more lovely maid than my Bess. My dear, we have had our first tussle, and warm work it was; but the enemy is now snug and comfortable under hatches, where he will remain until we come to anchor in the Solent, and carry him up Porchester Creek to rest awhile. I think he has got a headache, Bess, after the noise of the guns; and, perhaps, the small shot have given him a toothache, and the cannon-balls have very likely made his legs rheumatic. We had a fine time the last bout ashore, hadn't we, Bess? I sha'n't forget the room behind the shop, nor the summer-house where Luke caught us kissing, and you blushed crimson. Well, I dare say I shall get ashore again some time, though not, I hope, like our poor carpenter's mate, who has had both legs amputated, and will now for ever go on stumps. If your Jack came home on stumps, would you send him about his business, Bess? We fell in with the enemy——'

'Here the letter begins,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'What went before was like the froth on a pot of stingo.'

'We fell in with the enemy on the morning of the 18th, this being February the 20th. We should have missed her altogether, but, by the blessing of Providence, the fog cleared away and showed us the ship, half a mile or thereabouts on the weather-bow. 'Twas in full Channel. She hoisted the French flag, and we returned the compliment—such was our politeness—with a cannon-shot, pitched a yard or two wide of her. The enemy scorned to show her heels (wherefore I honour her, and give her what is due); perhaps because she carried heavier weight of metal and a larger complement than the "Tartar." As for the engagement which followed, it lasted for an hour or thereabouts; and then, on our coming to close quarters and preparing to board, Monsieur hauled down his colours, finding he had no stomach for pikes and cutlasses. Which was his stratagem; and mark the treachery of this bloody villain. For, while we prepared leisurely and unsuspecting to take possession, he bore up suddenly and boarded us. Fortunately, he had to deal with a well-disciplined

crew; but the fighting was hand-to-hand for awhile before they gave up the job and tried to back again to their own deck. There were fifty of them in the boarding-party, and not one got back, nor never a prisoner made, such was the rage of our men. So we gave them no more chance for treachery, but boarded in our turn; and hand-to-hand it was again, till all that was left of them were driven under hatches, where they now remain. There were a hundred and seventy of them when the action began, and we've thrown eighty bodies overboard. Consequently there are ninety prisoners. Our master, who is as tough a sea-dog as lives, calculates that at this rate—namely, and that is to say, every ship in the King's service taking one French ship a week, killing or disabling half the crew, and taking prisoner the other half—we shall in less than a twelvemonth leave his French Majesty never a sailor or a ship to his back, so he must surrender at discretion. But I doubt, for my own part, whether we shall have such good luck as this; and it may be a year and a half

or even two years before we are able to make an account of all the French fleets. We have lost twelve, killed and wounded; the second Lieutenant has parted with half an ear, sliced off by a French cutlass, and the master's mate is killed, his brains being blown out by a pistol fired in his face. But we have revenged him, my dear Bess. When the fight was over I drank your health in the gun-room in a tot of rum, being, thank God, without a scratch.'

Here was a gap, as if the letter had been interrupted at this point, and resumed later on.

'We are now, my dearest Bess, anchored at Spithead, and about to transfer our prisoners up the harbour to Porchester Castle, where they are to lay by until the war is ended or they are exchanged. 'Twill be a change for them and a rest, and no doubt they will be glad to be out of danger. 'Tis a convenient place for a prison, having two great towers, besides a smaller one, with a high wall all round and a ditch. And if the prisoners do escape, they will find the country-side rejoiced of the opportunity to murder them, being a

savage people, and much incensed with all French privateers. So, my sweetheart, no more at present from thy faithful JACK.

'Postscriptum.—Thy true-love knot is round my arm, and I wish my arm was round thy neck. I forgot to say that the prize is the "Mont Rozier," of La Rochelle; she is, we hope, to be purchased for the King's Navy—a handy useful ship, well found. Her captain was killed in the second part of the action. Otherwise, I think he would have been hanged for treachery. I love thee, Bess—I love thee!'

There was a beautiful letter for any girl to receive; full of love and kisses, and of gallant fighting! When I had read it through, she sat awhile perfectly still, the tears running down her cheeks. Then she made me read it again, more slowly, and bade me mark with pencil the passages which most she fancied. She could not read the writing, but could rest her eyes on those places and remember them. She was quick at catching up and remembering things, and when she had heard the letter

read a third time, she knew it all by heart, and never forgot it.

This was the only letter which Jack ever wrote to his mistress. Other letters he wrote to the Admiral, telling him of the wonderful exploits of the 'Tartar,' and of his share in the actions, but never a word more to Bess. The days passed on, and the girl sat, for the most part, in silence, waiting. So sat Penelope, expectant of her lord. Still she spoke of him; still she carried his letter in her bosom, wrapped in silk, and would take it out and gaze upon it, the tears rolling down her cheek. If she hoped for another letter, if she felt herself neglected, if she doubted his fidelity, I know not; for she said nothing.

In that interval she grew more beautiful. Her face, thus set upon the contemplation of one thing, became pensive, and her eyes grave. She smiled seldom, and the loud laugh which Jack loved, but which reminded others too much of her former associates, was no more heard. By constant endeavour, by imitation, by refraining from her old companions, and by

keeping guard over her speech, she softened not only her manner but also her appearance. Poor Bess! What would she say and suffer if she should learn that her Jack had ceased to love her? Yet, what other interpretation could be put upon his long silence? It was at Christmas, 1756, when the 'Tartar' sailed. It was in June, 1760, that Jack returned, and all that time only this one letter, though there had been many written to the Admiral.

'He will find,' said Bess, 'when he comes home, that I can read very well. And I know the charts of the seas where he has sailed. If only he still will think me beautiful.'

'Why, Bess,' I told her, 'as to beauty, there is no doubt about it. So if that is all there is to fear, have no pain on that score.' There was, however, a great deal more to fear; but this one dared not so much as to hint in her presence.

'There is a storm brewing,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'I feel it in the air. I know not what he may think when he comes home: she is a handsome

creature, and he may be for beginning all over again. Yet my mind misgives me. Why is there no letter, nor never a word to you, unless he has forgotten her? As for falling in love with another woman, that is hardly likely, seeing the busy life the poor lad hath led. But he hath forgotten her, Luke. Most women look for nothing else than to be forgotten when their husbands and lovers go to sea; they forget and are forgotten. Well—why not? Better so; then they suffer the less when one of the men is knocked o' the head and another goes off with someone else when his ship is next paid off. But Bess is different; and we have encouraged her; there will never be any other man in the world for her, except Jack. So, my lad, look out, I say, for squalls.'

Of course, we heard news of the 'Tartar.' Did she not fill half the Gazette? There never was so fortunate a ship, nor one more gallantly commanded. One cannot enumerate or remember half the prizes that she made in her first year's cruise in the Channel. A month after taking the 'Mont Rozier,' she

encountered the 'Maria Victoria,' twenty-four guns and 226 men; and, after a sharp engagement, compelled her to strike. The ship was taken over into the King's Navy, under the name of the 'Tartar's Prize.' Then, in April, Captain Lockhart fought the privateer 'Duc d'Aiguillon,' of twenty-six guns and 254 men. The French did not surrender till they had lost upwards of fifty killed and wounded. In May the privateer 'Penelope,' of eighteen guns and 181 men, was taken; and in October the 'Comtesse de Gramont,' eighteen guns and 155 men. She also was purchased into the Navy. But the crown of the 'Tartar's' exploits this year was the chase and capture of the 'Melampe,' of Bayonne, one of the finest privateers ever sent out from port. She was mounted with thirty-six guns, and had a crew of 330 men. The 'Tartar' chased her for thirty hours, and fought her for three hours before she struck. She also was added to the King's Navy, as a thirty-six-gun frigate; and a very useful vessel she proved.

Such achievements as these greatly dis-

heartened the French, and raised our own spirits. They did not, it is true, quite reach the ambitious aims of the master of the 'Tartar'; yet they called forth the gratitude of the nation. Therefore, at the end of the year, the merchants of London and Bristol combined to present Captain Lockhart with pieces of plate; the First Lieutenant of the 'Tartar' was transferred to the command of the 'Tartar's' prize, the 'Melampe,' which was renamed the 'Sapphire'; Jack was transferred to this ship with the First Lieutenant; and the Master of the 'Tartar' was promoted to be Lieutenant. As for the prize-money due to the officers and men, that amounted to a very pretty sum; but I do not know how much fell to Jack as his share.

CHAPTER XXV.

LIEUTENANT AARON FLETCHER.

WE who are always slower than the French—'but,' said Jack, 'we hold on the tighter'—now began to send out privateers on our own account, though for the most part neither so numerous nor so well found as the French. The men were not wanting, nor the spirit, but the prizes were not so many, and the prospect of gain not so attractive to our English sea-coast men as to the French. Mention has been made of a ship building in Mr. Taylor's yard at Rotherhithe; Jack was right when he pronounced her fit for something better than a lubberly sugar-ship. She was, in fact, the venture of a company of London merchants, and she was intended from the first for Letters

of Marque. A dangerous venture; but there was revenge in it, as well as the hope of profit; and, besides, two or three successful cruises will sometimes cover the whole cost of ship and crew, even if on the next voyage the ship is wrecked or taken. As for a crew, there is not much difficulty in getting volunteers for a privateer, where there is no flogging, and for the most part no discipline, and an officer has very little more authority than he can command with fist and rope's-end. The prospect of taking some rich merchantman from Martinique, laden with a great cargo of spices and sugar, is attractive, to say nothing of the fighting, the chance of which, happily, ever inflames a Briton's heart. No such desperate actions are recorded during this war, as those in which our privateers were engaged. The best privateersmen are said to be, not the regular seamen, to whom an action comes as part of the day's work, but those amphibious creatures found all round our coast, and especially about the Channel, who pretend to be engaged in the most innocent and harmless pursuits, and may

be found following the plough or driving the quill, or with an apron in a barber's shop, flouring a wig, or even behind a grocer's counter, weighing out pounds of sugar. Yet this is but a show and pretence, and their real trade takes them to and fro across the Channel, to the great detriment of His Majesty's revenue. Privateering, to such as these, is a kind of smuggling, but a finer kind, which one follows without the necessity of sometimes fighting the King's officers, and sometimes murdering an informer. Moreover, a fat merchantman is a far richer prize to bring home than a boat-load of kegs. Therefore, when the 'Porcupine' (so they called her) was launched, and fitted, and armed with eighteen nine-pounders and two six-pounders for her quarter-deck, there was no difficulty in finding a crew of picked men as good as any on board a King's ship, though lacking in discipline—a hundred and twenty in all. The crew of the 'Porcupine,' indeed, showed the stuff of which they were made before the ship sailed. It was in September of the year 1757, when the hottest Press ever

known in the Thames was undertaken, and not only were the lanes and alleys of Deptford, Wapping, and Ratcliff scoured for skulking watermen and seamen—the river being wholly deserted for fear of the Pressgang—but also the colliers and ships in the Pool were boarded and their men taken, leaving no more than two able seamen for every hundred tons, according to William the Third's Act. The gang boarded the 'Porcupine,' but the men seized their arms and threatened to fight for their liberty, whereat the lieutenant in command withdrew his men and sheered off, judging it prudent not to engage his company of a dozen or twenty with six score resolute fellows.

Meantime, Mr. Brinjes' prediction of misfortune as regards Aaron Fletcher came true—one knows not whether he did anything by his own black arts to bring about the calamities which fell upon him at this time. For, first of all, his boat, as fast a sailer as might be found for crossing the Channel, was picked up by a French privateer, who cared nothing for her being engaged in smuggling or in conveying

information or spies backwards and forwards from France to England or from England to France. All is fish that comes to the Frenchman's net. Therefore the 'Willing Mind' was taken in tow, and presently sold at auction in Boulogne Harbour; and so Aaron lost not only his boat but also his crew of three men, who were like rats for wariness, and could speak both French and English.

Thus went the greater part of his business; and he hung his head, going in great heaviness, and in his cups cursing the Apothecary, whose blood he threatened to spill, for causing his boat to be taken. But worse followed. His boat-building yard had become slack of work, and most of his hands were discharged. This was caused by his own neglect, and might have been repaired by steady attention to business. Unhappily, one night the yard took fire, and everything was burned except the little cottage within the gates, where Aaron lived alone. And then, indeed, he raged like a lion, swearing that he would kill, maim, and torture that devil of an Apothecary, who thus

pursued him. But Mr. Brinjes was no whit terrified.

Despite these things, we were all surprised to hear that Aaron was going on board the 'Porcupine' privateer; and still more astonished when we learned that he was appointed Third Lieutenant, his proper place being before the mast, or, at best, bo's'n's mate, or gunner's mate, for he was quite an illiterate fellow, who had learned nothing of taking an observation, except how to make it noon, and knew nothing save by rule of thumb of navigation. However, he knew the coast of France as well as any Frenchman, which was, I suppose, the reason why he was appointed an officer; and besides, he had acquired (and truly deserved), in Deptford, Greenwich, and Rotherhithe, the reputation of being a brave, reckless dog, who would fight like a bull-dog. For such work as was wanted of him, no doubt he was as good as any man who had passed his examination in Seething Lane.

Then Aaron got himself a coat of blue, like that worn by the King's officers (but without

the white facings), edged with gold—very fine. This he put on, with white stockings, white breeches, and a crimson sash, with a hanger—for all the world as if he were Lieutenant of the Royal Navy—and a hat trimmed with gold lace. Thus attired, he strutted up the street, the boys shouting after him, till he came to Mr. Westmoreland's shop, where Bess sat at the door, her work in her hand. 'Well, Bess,' he said, 'nothing was good enough for thee but an officer and a gentleman. I am an officer now, and if any man dares to say I am not a gentleman, I will fight him with any weapon he pleases. Since one officer has gone away, Bess, take on with another. Don't think I bear a grudge. Nay, I love thee still, lass, in spite of thy damned unfriendly ways.'

'You an officer, Aaron?' Women like fine feathers for themselves, but they are never dazzled with fine feathers in others. 'You an officer?' She surveyed him calmly from head to foot. 'White stockings do not make a gentleman. Your clothes are grand, to be sure. Pity you have not a better shirt to match so

fine a coat.' Aaron's linen, in truth, had neither lace nor ruffles, and his cravat was but a speckled kerchief. 'Go change thy linen, Aaron, before pretending to be a gentleman. Well,' she continued, perceiving that he was, as she desired him to be, abashed by the discovery of this deficiency, 'as for thy dress, 'twill serve for a privateer. Go fight the French, Aaron, and bring home plenty of prize-money. But think not thyself a gentleman.'

So she went indoors, and left him. I know not whether he bought himself a shirt to match the coat, but I am sure that on board the white stockings and the white breeches were safely stowed away, and a homelier garb assumed.

Aaron's sea-going lasted no great while. The Captain of the 'Porcupine' was a certain Stephen Murdon, who had commanded an armed merchantman in the China trade, in which he had seen fighting with the pirates, Chinese and Malay, which infest the narrow seas. He was a very brisk, courageous fellow,

skilful in handling his ship; and she being a fast sailer, he was generally able to choose or to decline an engagement, as suited him best. For instance, he would not engage a French privateer if he could avoid so doing, on the principle that it is foolish for dog to bite dog, and because it is the business of the King's ships to clear the Channel of privateers; but with a merchantman, however strong, he was like a bloodhound for the chase, and a bull-dog for fighting. I do not know how much prize-money he would have made for himself, but his owners were at first very much pleased with their venture, and promised themselves great returns. Unfortunately, a circumstance happened which brought the 'Porcupine's' cruise to an untimely end. There were many complaints from Holland against the English privateers, who mistook Dutch for French colours, and treated them accordingly. Captain Murdon was one of those who were suspicious of Dutch colours. Unfortunately, he one day overhauled a Dutch vessel conveying to Amsterdam no less a personage than the Spanish Ambassador;

and, on the pretence that she was sailing under false colours, plundered the ship, taking out of her, as the complaint of the Captain set forth, a purse containing seventeen guineas, twenty deal boxes containing valuable stuffs, and three bales of cambric, the whole valued at two hundred guineas. Nor was this all, for this audacious Captain Murdon helped himself as well to His Excellency's chests and cases containing jewels and treasure.

There was a great outcry about this affair, and Captain Murdon (who was very well known to have done it, but it was pretended there was no evidence) hastened to hand over the 'Porcupine' to her owners, paid off his crew, and recommended his officers to lie snug for awhile. I know not who had the booty, but the officers and crew had none. As for himself, he was provided with a ship in the East India trade, so as to get more speedily out of the country. The Government offered twenty pounds reward for the discovery of the ship which had thus insulted a friendly Power; but no one took the offer seriously, and war imme-

diately afterwards breaking out with Spain, no further trouble was taken in the matter. But thus Aaron's chances of prize-money were lost, and he himself returned to Deptford little richer than when he went away. Captain Murdon offered him, it is true, a berth on board his new ship; but Aaron had no desire to go fighting Chinese pirates, and therefore stayed at home. Then he began to pretend that he was putting up his building-sheds again; but, as you shall see, he had no luck: his fortune had deserted him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW MR. BRINJES EXERCISED HIS POWERS.

IT was on Saturday, the last day of June, in the year of grace 1760 (our Lieutenant having then been away at sea two years and a half), and on the stroke of seven, that Mr. Brinjes sallied forth from his shop. He was dressed—being now on his way to the Club at the Sir John Falstaff—in his black velvet coat with lace ruffles; he carried his laced hat under his arm, and had upon his head his vast wig, whose threatening foretop, majestic with depending knots, before and behind the shoulders, proclaimed his calling. In his hand he bore his gold-headed stick (not the famous skull-stick); his stockings, which in the morning were of grey woollen, knitted by the hands of Bess, were now

of white silk; and his shoes were adorned with silver buckles. He was no longer Apothecary to the scum of Deptford: he was in appearance a grave and learned Physician. Yet, if one looked more closely, it might be discerned that the wig was ill-dressed; the ruffles at his wrist torn; that one or two of the silver buttons had fallen from his coat-sleeves; that his stockings were splashed a little, and there was a rent in one; and that his shoes were only smeared, not brightened. These, however, were defects which Mr. Brinjes did not heed. It was enough for him to possess and to wear a coat and a wig which became the company which met at the Sir John Falstaff.

He stood awhile looking up and down the street, first casting his eye upwards to note the weather, a thing which no one who has been a sailor neglects, whether he goes upon deck or leaves the house. The sky was clear, the wind southerly, and the now declining sun shone upon the houses, so that, though mean and low, they glowed in splendour, and the Apothecary's silver pestle showed as if it were

of pure solid silver, and the Penman's golden quill as if it were indeed of burnished gold, and the Barber's brass vessels across the way, catching the sun by reflection, shone as if they, too, were of gold; while the diamond panes of the upper lattice windows were all on fire, and one's eyes could not brook to gaze upon them; the red tiles of the gables, though they were overgrown with moss, seemed as if they had newly left the potter's hands; and the timber-work of the house fronts was like unto black marble or porphyry. No painting was ever more splendid than those mean houses under the summer evening's sunlight. At the Barber's door there arose a curious cloud, which produced an effect as of a white mist rising from the ground. It was, however, nothing but one of the 'prentices flouring the Vicar's wig for Sunday. Lower down the street there was leaning against a post the tall form of Aaron Fletcher. He had nothing now, in his appearance, of the gallant privateer, being dressed as becomes a tradesman, in a fur cap, grey stockings, round shoes, and a drugget

waistcoat; yet there was in him something that looked like a sailor: however you disguise him the sailor always betrays himself. His hands were in his waistcoat pockets, and his eyes were fixed upon the Golden Quill, because he hungered still for a sight of the girl who lived beneath that sign. In spite of his strength and his courage, one word from Bess would have made this giant as weak as a reed. But as for her, she would no more so much as speak friendly with him, being angered at his importunity.

Bess sat in the open doorway, partly screened from the glare of the evening, and partly sitting in the open sunshine, because she was not one of those who fear to hurt her complexion. She was working at something which lay in her lap, and sat with her back turned to Aaron, as if she knew that he was there, and would not so much as look at him. Through the door one might see her father at his work, spectacles on nose.

Mr. Brinjes looked at her, still standing before his own door. Then she raised her

head, hearing his footstep, and laughed. She always laughed at sight of Mr. Brinjes in the evening, because, in his great wig and velvet coat, on his way to the Club, he was so different from Mr. Brinjes in his scratch or his night-cap, sitting in his parlour or his shop.

'Saucy baggage!' said the Apothecary. 'Stand up, Bess, and let me see how tall thou art.'

She obeyed, and stood up, overtopping Mr. Brinjes by more than the foretop of his wig; she was, in fact, five feet eight inches in height, as I know, because I measured her about this time. It is a great stature for a woman. She was now past her twenty-first year, and therefore full grown, and no longer so slim and slender in figure as when Jack sailed away at Christmas, in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-six. She was now a woman fully formed; her waist not slender, as fine ladies fondly love to have it, but like the ancient statues for amplitude; her shoulders large and square rather than sloping, her neck full and yet long, her skin of the whitest, her hair and eyes

of the blackest; as for the eyes, they were large and full and slow rather than quick of movement, a thing which betokens an amorous or passionate disposition; her face, as one sees in the faces of certain Italian painters, with an ample cheek, full and rosy lips, with a straight nose and low forehead. About her head she had tied a kerchief. For my own part, I have always maintained that Bess was the most beautiful woman I have ever looked upon in Deptford or anywhere else, though one may admit, what Castilla insists, that, however beautiful a girl may be, she belongs to her own class. Truly, all poor Bess's troubles came to her because she loved a gentleman.

Mr. Brinjes surveyed her critically. Then he sighed and said, 'Thou art, I swear, Bess, fit for the gods themselves! Well, child?'—and then he sighed again.

'Is there news?' she asked.

'I hear of none,' he replied, gravely. 'Bess, the time goes on. Is it well to waste thy youth on a man who comes not back? There are other men——'

'Talk not to me,' she cried, impatiently; 'talk not to me of other men. There is no other man in the world for me but Jack. As for other men—I scorn 'em.'

She drew from her bosom half a sixpence, tied to a piece of black ribbon. This she kissed, and put back again.

'It is long since we had news of him,' Mr. Brinjes went on, doubtfully, and dropping his voice, because Mr. Westmoreland sat within, poring over his books.

'He loves me,' she replied in a whisper. And the thought caused her cheek to glow, and her eyes became humid. 'He told me he should always love me. Why, a man cannot be continually writing letters. He wrote to me once—which is enough—to tell me again that he loves me. And I think of him all day long.'

'Well said, girl! That is only what is due to so gallant a lover.'

'I belong to him—I am all his. Why else should I desire to live? Why do I go to church, if not to pray for him?'

'Good girl! Good girl! Would that all women had such constant hearts! I have known many women, whether at home or at Kingston, or on the Guinea Coast. Some I have known jealous; some full of tricks and tempers: but never a one among them all to be constant. Good girl, Bess!'

'Sometimes I think — oh! — suppose he should never come back at all! or suppose I should learn that another woman had entrapped him with her horrid arts?'

Mr. Brinjes smiled, as one who knows the world.

'Sailors do sometimes fall into traps,' he said. 'They are everywhere laid for sailors. Perhaps in another port—nay, in half a dozen ports, he may have found—nay, child, be not uneasy. Why'—here he swore as roundly as if he had been an Admiral at least—'a thousand girls shall be forgotten, when once he sees thy handsome face again. What though his thoughts may have gone a-roving—though I say not that they have—they will come home. The Lieutenant will be true. Gad! There

cannot be a single Jack of all the Jacks afloat who would not joyfully come back to such a sweetheart.'

'Oh, yes!' She made as if she would draw something else from her bosom, but refrained. 'I have his letter, his dear letter. Jack is true. He swore that no one should ever come between him and me.'

'There is another thing, child. He left thee, Bess, a slip of a girl seventeen years old, with little but great black locks and roguish tricks. When he comes back he will find another Bess.'

'Oh!' she cried in alarm. 'But he will expect the same.'

'And such a Bess—such a beautiful Bess—fit for a Prince's love.'

'I want no Prince but Jack,' said Bess, her eyes soft and humid, and her lips parted.

'He will be satisfied. Rosy lips and black eyes, shapely head and apple-cheek, dimpled chin and smiling mouth, and such a throat! I have seen such, Bess, in the girls of the Guinea Coast when they are young; just such a throat

as thine—as slender and as round, though shiny black. For my own part, I love the colour.'

'Happy boy! happy girl!' he cried, after sighing heavily; 'I would I were young again to fight this lover for his mistress. Tedious it is to look on at the game which one would still be playing.'

'There is one thing which troubles me,' she said. 'It is the importunity of Aaron, who will never take nay for his answer. He comes every evening—nay, sometimes in the morning—telling me the Lieutenant has forgotten me, and offering to take his place. And he will still be saying things of Jack (who cudgelled him so famously). If I were a man I would beat him till he roared for mercy.' Her eyes now flashed fire, I warrant you, sleepy and calm as they had looked before. 'But I can do nothing; and Luke is too small and weak to fight so great a man. He stands there now—look at him!'

'Patience, my girl; patience! I will tackle this love-sick shepherd.'

More he would have said, but Mr. Westmoreland himself came to the door, his quill behind his ear, with round spectacles on his nose, blinking in the sunshine like an owl or a bat, as if the light was too much for him. He was dressed in a rusty brown coat, worn so long that the sleeves had exactly assumed the shape of his arms; the cuff of the right arm was shiny, where it had rubbed against the table; and the back was shiny, where it had rubbed against his chair. On his head was a nightcap of worsted. Strange it was that so feeble a creature should be father of such a tall, strong, and lovely girl. Yet these contrasts are not unknown.

'A fine evening, Mr. Brinjes,' he quavered, in his squeaky voice; 'a fine evening, truly.'

'Truly, Mr. Westmoreland.'

'Is there news of the Lieutenant?'

'I have none, sir.'

'Pray Heaven he be not killed or cast away. Many brave youths are nowadays killed or cast away at sea. You remember Jack Easterbrook, Bess?' She looked at Mr. Brinjes and smiled.

'I have never had a scholar (to call a scholar) like unto him. Dolts and blockheads are they all, compared with him. Never such a lad—never such a lad for quickness and for parts.'

Mr. Brinjes nodded and went on his way. Mr. Westmoreland spread his hands out in the sunshine as one who stands before a warm fire, and he pushed back his nightcap as if to warm his skull. But his daughter sat still, the knitting-needles idle in her lap and her eyes fixed as one who hath a vision, and her lips parted, as in a dream of happiness. Poor child! It was her last.

Mr. Brinjes walked slowly down the street until he came to Aaron Fletcher. Then he stopped and surveyed the man from head to foot.

'Aaron,' he said, 'have a care; have a care. Thou hast been warned already. A certain girl, who shall be nameless, is food for thy betters, master boat-builder. Food for thy betters!'

Aaron muttered something.

'Why, it is but two years and a half agone,

if thou wilt remember, good Aaron, that a certain thing happened wherefore I warned thee that trouble would follow. Has it followed? Where is the "Willing Mind?" Captured by the French. Where is the prize-money thou wast to get from the privateer? Her cruise was cut short. Where is thy building-yard? It is burned down. Where is thy business? It is gone. Thus would-be murderers are rightly punished. Wherefore, good Aaron, again I say —Have a care.'

Aaron made no reply, but shuffled his feet.

'And what do we here?' Mr. Brinjes asked sternly. 'Do we wait about the street in hopes of catching a look—a covetous and a wanton look—upon a face that belongs to another man? Aaron Fletcher—Aaron Fletcher, I have warned thee before.'

'With submission, sir,' said the young man, 'the street is free to all. As for my betters, a boat-builder is as good as a penman, I take it.'

'Go home, boy; go home. Leave Bess alone, or it will be the worst for thee.'

'I take my answer from none but Bess.'

'She hath given thee an answer.'

Here the young man plucked up courage, and fell to railing and cursing at Mr. Brinjes himself—a thing which no one else in the whole town would have dared to do—not only for losing him his boat and building-yard by wicked machinations and magic, but also for standing, he said, between him and the girl he loved, and keeping her mind filled with nonsense about a King's officer, who had gone away and forgotten her; whereas, if it had not been for this meddlesome old Apothecary—the devil fly away with him and all like unto him!—the girl would have been his own long ago, and he would have made her happy.

'Here is fine talk!' said Mr. Brinjes, at length, and after hearing him without the least signs of anger. 'Here is a proper gamecock! Aaron, thou must have a lesson. So! That hollow tooth of thine, my lad: the one at the back, the last but one in the left hand lower jaw!' The fellow started, and turned pale. 'Go home now, quickly.' Here Mr. Brinjes shook the gold head of his walking-stick

threateningly, while his one eye flamed up like a train of powder. 'Go home; on thy way the tooth will begin to shoot and prick as with fiery needles. Go, therefore, to bed immediately. It will next feel as if a red-hot iron were clapped to it and held there, and thy cheek will swell like a hasty pudding. The pain will last all night. In the morning, come to me; and, perhaps, if I am merciful and thou showest signs of grace and repentance, I may pull out the tooth. Thou canst meditate, all night long, on the incomparable graces of the girl who can never be thy sweetheart.'

The young man received this command with awe-struck eyes and pale cheek. Then he obeyed, going away with hanging head and dangling hands—a gamecock with the spirit knocked out of him.

Strange, that a doctor should be able to cause, as well as cure, disease. As Aaron Fletcher drew near to his workshop, he felt the first sharp pang and pricking of toothache. When he reached his bed, the misery was intolerable. All night long he rolled upon his

pallet, groaning. In the morning he repaired to Mr. Brinjes, dumbfounded, his face tied up, seeking for nothing but relief.

'Aha!' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Here is our lad of spirit—here is our lover. Love hath its thorns, Aaron, as well as its roses. Sit down, sit down. The basin, James—and cold water. It is a grinder, and will take a strong pull. Hold back his head, James—and his mouth wide open. So—with a will, my lad. It is done. Go no more to the neighbourhood of Bess Westmoreland, my lad. 'Tis a brave tooth, and might have lasted a lifetime. The neighbourhood of Bess Westmoreland is draughty, full of toothaches and rheumatisms. I think I saw another hollow grinder on the other side. Take great care, Aaron. Avoid Church Lane, especially in the evening. Go thy way now, and be thankful that things are no worse.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN COMMAND.

WHEN Mr. Brinjes had disposed of this importunate swain, he went on his way, and presently entered the Blue Parlour, where some of the gentlemen were already assembled, waiting for the arrival of their president or chairman, the Admiral, who was not long in coming, with his escort of negroes.

When he had taken his seat, his pipe filled, his gold-headed stick within reach, he rapped upon the table once.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'good evening, one and all.'

Then he rapped upon the table twice.

Immediately the landlord appeared at the door, bearing in his hand a great steaming bowl

of punch, which he placed before the president. One of the negroes filled a brimming glass and gave it to his master. Then he filled for the others and passed the glasses round; and the Admiral, standing up, shouted, 'Gentlemen, His Majesty's health, and confusion to his enemies!'

This done, he sat down and prepared to spend a cheerful evening.

By this time it was eight o'clock, though not yet sunset—though the western sky was red and the sun low in the west. With much whistling of pipes and ringing of bells the day's work at the Yard hard by was brought to a close. Whereupon a sudden stillness fell upon the air, broken only by the hoarse cries and calls from the ships in mid-river now working slowly up stream, with flow of tide and a light breeze from the south or south-east.

'Gentlemen,' said the Admiral, with importance, 'I have this day received despatches from Jack Easterbrook, my ward, which I have brought with me to gladden your hearts, as they have gladdened mine.' He tugged a

packet out of his pocket, and laid it on the table before him. 'He writes,' continued the Admiral, 'from his ship, the "Sapphire" frigate, Captain John Strachan; and, to begin with, the letter is dated November, but appears to have been written from time to time as occasion offered. At that time he was with Admiral Sir Edward Hawke, whose health, gentlemen, we will drink.'

They did so. The Admiral proceeded, with the deliberation which belongs to one-armed men, to open the letter, and, after, calling for a candle, to read it.

'"Nov. 22, 1759."—The boy writes, gentlemen, as I said before, from aboard the frigate "Sapphire," Captain Strachan, then forming part of Commodore Duff's squadron, and of Sir Edward Hawke's fleet, blockading the port of Brest. It is his account of the action whereof intelligence reached the Admiralty six months ago. Humph! At the beginning, the boy presents his duty and respect, which is as it should be. He is well, and without a scratch. But the news is six months old,

and of the stalest. Yet it is welcome. Now listen.

'"I wrote to you last when we were driven by stress of weather to raise the blockade of Brest and put in at Torbay."—He did, gentlemen, and you heard his letter read. —"I hope my letter came to hand."—It did.— "By stress of weather to raise the blockade of Brest."—This letter-reading is tedious work.' The Admiral took another drink of punch, and proceeded, folding the letter so as to catch the light, and reading very slowly. '"When the gale abated we put to sea again, but found that the Frenchman had slipped his cables and was off. 'Twas a fisherman of Beer, a little village on the Devonshire coast, who saw the French fleet under full sail, and brought the news. We found out, afterwards, there were twenty sail of the line and five frigates that sailed out of Brest, being bound, as was conjectured, for Quiberon Bay. But this we could not rightly tell. However, we crowded sail and after them, the wind blowing fresh, the water lumpy and the weather thick, so that we made a poor

reckoning, and the fleet was much scattered. However, on the sixth day, being the morning of the 20th, the signal was hoisted of the enemy's fleet, and the Admiral gave his signal to close up for action. Well, there they were in full sight, but apparently with mighty little stomach for the fight; and, instead of shortening sail and accommodating us like gentlemen, they scudded before us. However, towards eight bells, when the men had taken their dinners and their rum, and were in good fighting trim, and ready to meet the Devil himself on his three-decker"—'tis a deuce of a boy, gentlemen—"the 'Warspite' and the 'Devastation' had the good luck to come up first with the French rear, and the action began. Very soon we all drew up, and pounded away. As for the 'Sapphire,' we, with the 'Resolution,' seventy-four, were speedily engaged with the 'Formidable,' eighty, Rear-Admiral Verger; and a very brisk engagement it was, the Frenchman being full of spirit. But he had the sense to strike after three hours of it, and after losing 200 men killed and wounded. There was a very good

account made of the other ships, though not without misfortunes on our part. The 'Thésée,' seventy-four, thinking to fight her lower-deck guns, shipped a heavy sea, and foundered, with all her crew. She would have made a splendid prize, indeed, and a magnificent addition to His Majesty's Fleet. But it was not to be."—The decrees of Providence, gentlemen,' said the Admiral, 'are not to be questioned or examined. But it passes human understanding to see the sense of sinking the "Thésée," instead of letting her become a prize and an ornament to King George's Navy, and useful for the cause of justice.' Then he continued reading; '"The French ship 'Superbe,' seventy, also capsized"—Dear, dear, gentlemen! another loss to us—"and went down, I think, from the same cause. So here were two good ships thrown away, as one may say, by lubberly handling. We had bad luck with two more noble ships: one of them, the 'Héros,' as beautiful a seventy-four as you ever clapped eyes on, struck; but the waves were, unluckily, running too high for a boat to be lowered, and in the night she ran

aground. So did the 'Soleil-Royal,' eighty; and next day we had to set fire to them, though it was enough to bring tears to the most hard-hearted for thinking how they would have looked sailing up the Solent, the Union Jack at the stern, above the great white Royal. Our misfortunes did not end here; for H.M.S. 'Resolution' unfortunately went ashore, too, and now lays a total wreck, and all her crew drowned. The 'Essex,' also, went ashore and is lost, but her crew saved. As for us, it was stand by, load and fire, for nearly three hours, but only two officers killed and three wounded, with twenty men killed and thirty wounded. I think the Mounseers, who were safe within the bar of the river, will stay there so long as we are in sight. For though they pounded us, we've mauled them, as I hope you will allow. 'Tis thought that we may be despatched in search of Thurot's squadron. So no more at present from your obedient and humble JOHN EASTERBROOK." Well, gentlemen, there is my letter, and what do you think of it?'

'Always without a scratch,' said Mr.

Brinjes. 'Well, the lad is as lucky as he is brave. Every bullet has its billet. Pray that the bullet is not yet cast which will find its billet in Jack. Admiral, let us drink the health of this gallant lad.'

And then they fell to talking of Jack's future, and how they should all live to see him an Admiral and a Knight, and in command of a fleet, and achieving some splendid victory over the French. But Mr. Brinjes checked them, because, he said, that to anticipate great fortune is, as the negroes of the Gold Coast know full well, to draw down great disaster. But still they talked of the brave boy who had grown up among them, and was now doing his duty like a man.

Now, in the midst of this discourse, the landlord ran into the room, crying, 'Admiral and gentlemen, here comes a French prize up the river!' And all, leaving their pipes and punch, hurried forth into the garden.

There is no more gallant sight than the arrival of a prize, especially when, as then happened, she comes up the river at the sunset

of a glorious summer day, when the yellow light falls upon her sails, and colours every rope of her rigging, and when, as then happened, she bears about her all the marks of a long and terrible battle—her bulwarks broken away, her mainmast gone, great rents and holes in her side, her sails shattered, and even the beautiful carved group which once served for a figure-head, such as the French love, broken and mutilated.

'A French prize, truly, gentlemen,' said the Admiral. 'There is a French cut about her lines—and look! there is the white flag with the Union Jack above.'

She came up Greenwich Reach, her heavy sails barely drawing, as if she was ashamed of being seen a prisoner in an English port. At her stern floated the flag of the French Navy, the great white flag with the Royal arms in gold. But above this flag there floated the British Ensign. And every gentleman in the company tossed his hat and shouted at the sight.

'Landlord,' said the Admiral, 'fetch me

your glass, and quick. The evening falls apace.'

The landlord brought a sea telescope.

'She's a fifty-eight gun-ship, gentlemen. There has been warm work. Mainmast gone, mizen topmast carried away, bows smashed, rigging cut to pieces. Seems hardly worth the trouble of bringing up the Channel. But'—here he wiped the glass with his coat-sleeve, and applied it more curiously, 'who is that upon the quarter-deck? Gentlemen—gentlemen all—it is . . . it is . . . it is none other than Jack Easterbrook himself in command! Damn that boy for luck! Cudjo, ye lubber, bring me my stick! Gentlemen, we will all hasten to the Yard, and board the ship as soon as she drops her bower. Landlord, more punch! Jack's home again, and in command of a prize! And, landlord, if I find my negroes sober when I come back, gad! I'll break every bone in your body!'

In this triumphant way did Jack come home, in charge of a splendid frigate, the 'Calypso,' taken after as obstinate an action as

one may desire or expect, by the 'Sapphire,' in the Chops of the Channel, and sent to Deptford under command of Lieutenant John Easterbrook, to be repaired and added to His Majesty's Navy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW BESS LISTENED FOR HIS STEP.

IT was not until nearly midnight that Mr. Brinjes came home—a late hour even in London, where they turn night into day; but at Deptford there is not so much as a single drinking-house open at that hour, and everyone, rogues and honest men, the virtuous and the abandoned, are all alike in bed and asleep. The moon was full and the street was as light as day. Over the Penman's shop the lattice-window was partly open.

'It is Bess's room,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'She is asleep, and dreaming of her Lieutenant. And he hath forgotten her. 'Tis pity she had not listened to Aaron's voice. He hath surely forgotten her, seeing that he hath well-nigh for-

gotten me, and asked no questions at all concerning her. Sleep on, Bess; sleep on, my girl. To-morrow thou wilt not sleep at all: and the next day, or the next, will come the whirlwind! Perhaps the sight of thy charms . . . but I know not. Our honest lad is changed.'

He opened the door of his shop, and went into his own den.

At nine of the clock, or thereabouts, when the early chins had been shaved, and the wigs dressed and sent round to the gentlemen, Mr. Peter Skipworth, the Barber, found time to run across the street to his gossip and neighbour the Penman.

'Great news, Mr. Westmoreland!' he cried. 'Great news for Deptford!'

'Why?' asked the Penman. 'Is another Czar coming here?'

'No—no. But the Lieutenant has come home.'

'Lieutenant Easterbrook?'

'What other? He came up the river last night, in command—think of that! the Lieutenant in command!—of a prize sent here to

be repaired and added to His Majesty's Navy. The Admiral ordered his negroes to get drunk, so great was the worthy gentleman's joy; and now they lie like hogs at the Sir John Falstaff, and cannot yet be awakened, though 'tis nigh twelve hours since they rolled over.'

'Lieutenant Easterbrook, who once was Jack, whom I taught the elements of navigation—he hath returned?' Mr. Westmoreland was slow of catching news, being always wrapped in the study of mathematics.

Bess stopped her work at the first mention of his name, and listened—her heart beating, and her cheek now flushed, now pale. Oh! he was come home again!

'We have not yet seen him,' the Barber continued; 'though I expect he will come to have his hair dressed and his chin shaven. None other hand but mine shall touch him, I promise you. The landlord of the Sir John Falstaff says that a more gallant gentleman he hath never set eyes upon.'

'Ha!' said Mr. Westmoreland. 'That the Lieutenant is safe and sound, I rejoice. But

the brave boy who was so good at his figures, he, neighbour, will no more return to us. He is gone, and will never come back again. Where is he now—that boy? Where are now all the boys who have since grown into men? What has become of them? I doubt he will forget his humble friends and well-wishers.' The Barber ran back to his own shop. 'Dost remember the Lieutenant, Bess?'

But Bess made no reply. He was come back—her splendid lover! How could she answer her father's prattle, or think about anything but Jack and love? Already she felt his arms about her neck, and his kisses on her cheek; and she was suffused with blushes and the glow of happiness.

She would not, she thought, betray her eagerness and her joy. Therefore, she went about her household work as usual, yet with a beating of her heart and expectancy, as if he might send the Apothecary's assistant for her at any moment. When all was done, and the whole house as neat and clean as my lady's tea-table, Bess went upstairs to her bedroom,

and began to prepare for her sweetheart, her heart filled with gladness and pride that he was come home again in a manner so glorious; and with terror, also, lest she might have lost some of her charms. She looked in her glass. Nay, she was more beautiful, she saw plainly, than when he left her nigh upon three years ago: her eyes were brighter, her figure fuller, her lips ruddier, her skin whiter, her cheeks rosier. If Jack loved her for her beauty he must needs, she knew, and smiled at the pleasing thought, love her now much more. Then she drew his letter from her bosom, where it lay wrapped in its silken bag, and read it all over again, knowing the words by heart. 'There is not,' it said, 'in all the world a more beautiful girl than my Bess, nor a fonder lover than her Jack.'

She put on her finest and best—with the coral beads which Jack had given her to hang round her neck, and the ribbons—also his gift—would he remember them as well? She dressed her hair in the way that he used to love, and then, when all was ready, she stole down the

stairs, and so out by the back way to the Apothecary's parlour, that bower of love, though it was not also a bower of roses and fragrant flowers.

The room was empty. In the shop sat Mr. Brinjes, in his place, the great book before him; the assistant, James Hadlow, stood at the counter, rolling and mixing, and the shop was filled with women who had brought sick children.

'Mr. Brinjes,' cried Bess.

'Ay. . . . Ay, my girl,' he replied.

'He has come home,' she cried, heedless now of the women and their gossip.

'Very like—very like—so they tell me.'

'So they tell me!' she echoed, laughing. 'As if it mattered nothing. Yet he will but shake hands with the Admiral and come here. "So they tell me," he says.'

'I come, Bess,' he replied, looking at her sadly; 'I come in a few minutes. Now, you women who have had your answer and your physic, take your brats away. This morning I am benevolently disposed, and will cure them

all. Go away, therefore, and prate no more. I come in a few minutes, Bess.'

So she waited, glowing with the anticipation of her lover's welcome, her eyes soft and humid, her bosom heaving; and what with the tumult of her soul and her finery—for, as I have said, she had put on her coral and her ribbons—and all his gifts, looking truly a most beautiful creature. At half-past twelve Mr. Brinjes closed his great book, descended from his stool, and came into the parlour.

'I have seen him, Bess,' he said. 'I saw him last night.'

'Oh! you have seen him, and you did not wake me up to tell me. You have spoken to him. What did he say? How doth he look? What did he ask about me? What messages did he send? And is he wounded? Is he safe and well? Oh! but he will be here directly. Even now his step may be in the street—Listen!—no—not yet—he will come to tell me! Why—you tell me nothing. Once you said that my Jack might forget me. I will not tell him that, Mr. Brinjes, because he is

masterful, and I would not anger him against you. Why, you tell me nothing. I have put on all the things he gave me. Am I looking well? Do you think he will find me changed?'

'For your questions, Bess, he looks strong and well, though somewhat changed in manner, and colder than of old; and to some of us he might have shown more civility. For me, I complain not, though he gave me but a cold hand; but Mr. Shelvocke may justly complain, and Mr. Underhill—though one, truly, was but a supercargo, and the other but the purser.'

'Jack can never forget his old friends,' said Bess, 'any more than he can forget his old love. But he is now in command of a prize.'

'Bess, my girl,' said Mr. Brinjes, very earnestly, 'don't build hopes on the promise of a sailor. My dear, I know the breed, all my life, being now past four score and ten. I have lived among sailors. I tell thee, child, I know them. With them, it is out of sight out of mind. When a man goes fighting, hath he

room in his mind for a woman? And the more a woman loves a sailor, the less he loves her. If he hath forgotten thee, my dear, let him go without a tear or a sigh, for there are plenty other men in Deptford who would gladly possess thy charms.'

'Stop!' she cried, flying out suddenly. 'Why, you are talking like a mad thing! You don't know my Jack. How should you know him? How should you know any men except the pirates, your old friends, and the rough tarpaulins who come here to be healed? Who are you, a little common apothecary, to talk of men like the Lieutenant? How are you to know the ways of the King's officers? Why, if you have been to sea in a King's ship, 'twas only to mess with the Midshipmen and the Purser's Mate.'

'Well, Bess, well,' he replied, not angry, but bearing the attack with meekness. 'That shall be as you please. If your man is constant he will seek thee here, in the old place. If he is not, we will, I say, be reasonable, and expect no better than others receive.'

'Oh! If you were a young man—a man like Aaron,' cried Bess. 'Jack should beat you to a jelly for this.'

'Ay, ay—very like, very like. You shall beat me if you like, my girl. Bess,' said Mr. Brinjes, looking her earnestly in the face, 'if it would give you any pleasure, and bring your lover back, you should beat me yourself till you could lay on no longer.'

'My lover will come back to me,' she replied. 'He will be here this morning or this afternoon. Of course, he will come as soon as he can.'

'Perhaps. But he is changed. He sat among the gentlemen of the Club last night, but it was to please the Admiral, not himself. He wanted none of our company. I sat beside him, but he asked me no question at all. What!—should I not know the lover's eyes? Bess, he hath forgotten thee.'

'You are a liar!' she replied, springing to her feet, as if she would take him at his word and lay on till she could lay on no longer. 'You say this because you are old and ill-

tempered, and envious of younger people's happiness. Who are you that Jack should remember you? Who but a common sailors' apothecary—and he a Lieutenant in Command?'

'Ay, ay, my girl; pay it out. I am a sailors' apothecary. I am old and envious. Pay it out. I value not thy words—no, not even a rope's yarn—because, Bess, I love thee, my dear, and I would not see thee unhappy about any man. What is a man worth beside a lovely woman? If I were a woman, would I throw my love away upon a single man? Two years and more hast thou wasted upon this fine lover, who, when he comes back, hath never a word to ask—not even, "How fares my Bess?"'

'Why,' said Bess, 'how could he ask concerning me, before those gentlemen? Say no more, Mr. Brinjes, for I would not be angered and show a red cheek when he comes. You know that I am easily put out. Besides, you are only laughing at me, and I am a fool to fly out. Jack will come to me as soon as he

can leave his ship. Very likely he will not get away until the evening.'

So she sat down on the window-seat, and recovered her spirits, feeling no doubt at all, nor any misgivings, and began talking merrily of what she would say when he came, and what he would say to her, and how they would brew him a glass of punch such as he loved, before they suffered him to say a word of his own adventures, and how she would fill for him a pipe of tobacco, thinking—poor wretch!—that her lover was unchanged not only in his affections, but also in his manners.

Then Mr. Brinjes made his dinner. That is to say, he fried his beefsteak and onions, and presently ate them up, with a tankard of black beer. After dinner he took a glass of punch, filled and smoked a pipe of tobacco, and then, rolling himself in his pillows, fell fast asleep, as was his wont.

Bess meantime, her wrath subdued, sat in the window-seat, waiting. But the step she looked for came not.

So passed the afternoon.

Towards three o'clock, Mr. Westmoreland, who had been so much occupied with his work that he forgot his dinner, began to feel certain pangs in the internal regions, which he at first attributed to colic, and blamed himself for greediness at meals; but as the pain increased and became intolerable, he pushed away his papers, and sat up, suddenly remembering that he had not had any dinner at all, and that these were pangs of hunger. Three o'clock and no dinner! Where in the world was Bess?

He was accustomed, however, to small consideration from women, and proceeded to rummage in the cupboard, where he found some cold provisions, off which he made a very good dinner. Then, as the day was fine, and the sun shining, he stood in the doorway enjoying the warmth.

As he stood there, he saw, marching up the street, no other than the Lieutenant himself, whom he recognised, though he was greatly changed, having now not only filled out in figure, and become a man, who when last seen was a stripling, but having acquired the dignity

of the quarter-deck, and the assurance which comes of exercising authority.

However changed, Jack did not forget his old friend.

'What!' he said, 'Mr. Westmoreland! Thou art well, I hope, my friend?'

'I am better than I deserve to be, sir, and glad to see your Honour safe home again.'

'Why, Mr. Westmoreland, the bullet that has my heart for its billet hath not yet found me, though it may be already cast for aught I know. Thou art still busied with logarithms?'

'By the blessing of Heaven, sir,' said Mr. Westmoreland, 'I have had much to do, both in the advancement of fine penmanship and the calculation of the logarithmic tables.'

Jack nodded and passed on; but he remembered something, and laughed. Then he hesitated, and looked back into the Penman's room.

'You had a daughter, Mr. Westmoreland—Bess, her name was, and a comely girl. I hope she is well. But I see her not in the shop.

No doubt she is married long ago, and the mother of thumping twins.'

He laughed, and nodded, and went on his way.

'My daughter, your Honour,' Mr. Westmoreland began, but the Lieutenant was already out of hearing.

'Now,' said the Penman, 'saw one ever a better heart? He not only remembers me, which is natural, seeing that I was his instructor, but he remembers my girl as well. Where is Bess? She will laugh when I tell her. Mother of twins! Ho, ho! "Thumping twins!" he said; Bess will laugh.'

About four in the afternoon Mr. Brinjes woke up, and slowly recovered consciousness, until he felt strong enough to take his afternoon punch; after which he sat up, and became brisk again, looking about the room, and remembering all that had been said.

'Bess,' he cried, 'hath your lover come?'

She shook her head.

'Courage, my girl, courage. Perhaps when he sees thy comely face again he will

remember. What! To be loved by such a girl would fire an Esquimaux or a Laplander. Take courage, therefore. There is no more beautiful woman in Deptford, Bess. Take courage.'

'I am waiting for my sweetheart,' she replied, coldly. 'Why should I take courage? He hath been delayed by his affairs. He will come presently.'

'Bess,' Mr. Brinjes whispered, 'there is a way to bring him back.'

'To bring him back? This old man will drive me mad!'

'There is a way, Bess. The old negro woman gave thee a charm to keep him safe from shot and steel. She will give thee one, if I compel her, to bring him to thy knees. Nay, she will not at thy bidding. And for why? Because she wants Miss Castilla to marry the Lieutenant. Yet, if I compel her, she will make thee such a charm. Then he must needs come straight to thee, his heart mad with love, though a hundred fine ladies tried to drag him back.'

'I know not what you mean.'

Mr. Brinjes took up his famous magic stick, the stick with the skull upon it. 'It is by virtue of this stick, which gives its possessor, she believes, greater Obeah wisdom than she hath herself attained unto. Wherefore, if I order her to do a thing she cannot choose but obey, else I might put Obi upon her. She hath given me the secrets of all her drugs, by means of which, if I live long enough, I may find out the greatest secret of all, and be like unto the immortal angels. She shall obey me in this as well, Bess. Say but the word, and she shall bring him back, though Castilla die for love of the handsome Lieutenant.'

'No, no,' said Bess. 'He has not forgotten me.'

'Child, I *know* that he has. Why, when he went away, if he thought of you his eyes softened. He could not look upon me without remembering his days spent in this room. Yet his eyes softened not. Believe me, he will come here no more. It is strange. . . . I know not what will happen. . . . Sure I am

that I shall sail once more upon the Southern Seas, with Jack upon the quarter-deck. A dozen times or more have I inquired of Philadelphy, and still she sees a ship with Jack—and me—and you, Bess—you. Why, I am ninety years of age, and more, girl. Shall I get that charm for thee? If I could get it no other way I would even bribe her with this stick, when all my Obi leaves me, and I shall cause and cure diseases no better than the quacks of Horn Fair and of Bartholomew.'

But Bess shook her head.

'I will have no charm,' she said. 'If Jack will forget me, let him forget me. But he has got my name tattooed upon his arm and he has got my lock tied round his wrist. If these will not charm him back, nothing else shall.'

So she fell into silence. But at seven in the evening, when Mr. Brinjes put on his wig and coat for the Club, she arose and went home.

'Why,' said her father, 'where hast been all day, girl? There was no dinner. Well; it matters not'—because her face warned him not

to rebuke her—'it matters not, and, indeed, I found enough cold bits in the cupboard. But, Bess, thou hast missed a sight.'

'What sight?'

'The sight of a gallant gentleman. I have seen the Lieutenant. He passed by this way to the Admiral's. 'Tis a brave officer now, no taller, perhaps, than when he left us last; but then he was a stripling, and now he is well filled out and set up as brave and comely as one would wish to set eyes upon.'

'And he came to the shop to see me, then?'

'You, Bess? Why should he wish to see you? No—no. . . . A gentleman like that cannot be expected to remember a mere girl. But he had not forgotten me, for when I saw him and took off my cap to him, he stopped and kindly asked me how I fared. His Honour is not one who forgets his humble friends.'

'Did he ask after me?'

'He did, I warrant. He said, "You had a daughter, Mr. Westmoreland." So he looked into the room as if he would give you, too, a

greeting; but no one was there. So he said, "But she is married long ago, I dare swear, and hath thumping twins by this time." "Thumping twins," he said, Bess. His Honour was always a merry lad. He remembered me directly; and he hath not even forgotten thee, Bess. Do not think it.'

He had not, indeed. But his remembrance was worse than his forgetfulness. Better to have been forgotten than to be thus remembered.

Then her father left her, to take his pipe and have his evening talk with his cronies; and Bess was left alone in the house. Just so, nearly three years before, she had been left sitting by the fire, when her lover came to her and embraced her, with words which he had now forgotten but she remembered still! Oh, if he should now, as then, lift the latch, and find her there alone, and she could fall upon his breast and tell him all the things in her heart!

She listened for his footstep. Other steps passed by the house, but not the step she

looked for; and then her father came home, cheerful and full of talk about the gallant deeds of the Lieutenant, and she must needs give him his supper and listen and make reply.

The Apothecary was right when he said, 'Sleep on, Bess, sleep on. Thou wilt sleep but little to-morrow night.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

'HE HATH SUFFERED A SEA CHANGE.'

OUR Lieutenant was engaged all the morning with the Port Admiral and with the Navy Office, but in the after part of the day the Admiral made a great feast for him, as he had done on his last return, to which I was bidden with the rest. But the change which I perceived in him greatly surprised me, and, indeed, all of us. For the young sea-cub, rude in speech and careless of behaviour, was quite gone. Behold in his place a gentleman of polite manners, and as careful of his speech as if he had been all his life in St. James's Street. This was indeed astonishing.

There are, it is certain, too many Captains in the King's ships who have never known

better company than they find in a Portsmouth tavern, so that the ridicule which has been lavished upon naval Captains is not undeserved; there are also ships which are no better, as a school of manners for the young officers, than Portsea Hard, so that the Lieutenants and Midshipmen in such vessels hear nothing but rough language with profane swearing, and, even at the Captain's table, which is copied in the wardroom and the gunroom, find the manners of a Newcastle collier. There are also Captains who should never have left the polite part of town, because they pine continually for the pleasures of the theatre and Ranelagh, the clubs of St. James's Street, Covent Garden suppers and gambling-houses; who reek of bergamot, and appear daily on the quarter-deck dressed as if for the Park, and in their hair not a curl out of place, or a single touch of pomatum and powder abated. These men are not those who crowd all sail in pursuit of the enemy, and hasten to lay yard-arm to yard-arm. The sailors call them Jacky Fal-las, and respect nothing in them but their authority over the

cat-o'-nine-tails. Other Captains again there are (under one of them it was Jack's good fortune to serve) who possess such manners, and in their cabins exhibit and expect such conversation and behaviour, as one finds in the most polite assembly, yet are no whit behind the most old-fashioned sea-dog in courage. What could we expect of Jack when he came home to us, after four years spent in wandering among savages, and in a French prison among common sailors, but that he should be rude and rough? What else could we expect, after sailing under a commanding officer of good birth and breeding, than that he should return with polished manners and softened language?

This fact explained part of the change which had taken place in him. But it did not explain all, for Jack, who had formerly avoided the society of ladies, now astonished us by his demeanour towards Madam and Castilla, especially the latter, whose conversation he courted, addressing himself to her continually, so that she was fain to blush under his manifest and undisguised admiration.

This would not have been wonderful in any other man, because eyes of heavenly blue, light brown curls, delicate features, a lovely shape, and the sweetest complexion in the world, might well call forth admiration. But Castilla could boast the same charms, though not so ripe, three years before, when they moved him not a whit. Rather, he regarded them with the contempt of one who has only eyes for the darker charms. Alas! the same look was gathering in his eyes—the look of tenderness and of a hungry yearning—while he gazed upon Castilla which had once been kindled by the black eyes of our poor Bess.

'Now,' cried the Admiral, when Madam retired with Castilla, 'fore Gad! we'll make a night of it. Clean glasses, ye black devils, and brisk about! Jack, I hope the liquor is to your liking. I love the Mediterranean, for my own part, because the wine is cheap, and strong, and plenty. Drink about, gentlemen, and when you are tired of the port we will have in the the punch. Gentlemen, let us drink the health of the Lieutenant!'

So the bottle began to fly, and the company presently grew merry, and all began to talk together, every man speaking of the glorious actions in which he had taken part; and, as is natural when the heart is uplifted with generous wine, every man thinking that the victory was won by his own valour. Thus, the Admiral related how he had planted the British flag on the island of Tobago; and before he had finished the narrative Mr. Shelvocke interrupted in order to tell the company that it was he alone who had, with his own hand, sacked and burned the town of Payta, and it was he who boarded the Spanish ships on their escape from Juan Fernandez; next, the good old Admiral struck in again to explain who it was that had made Sir Cloudesley Shovel's victories possible. Captain Mayne, at the same moment, remembered that the powerful assistance he had lent to Admiral Vernon at Portobello had never been properly set forth by historians; and so on. But our hero, who had seen already more engagements than any man present, though he was not yet twenty-four, spoke little, and I observed, which

was indeed remarkable in a naval officer, and would be, in this drinking age, remarkable in any man, that he did not drink deep. Presently, when the others were flushed in the cheeks, and some of them thick of speech—the first signs of drunkenness—Jack rose, saying:

'By your leave, Admiral, I will join the ladies.'

'What?' said the Admiral. 'Desert the company? Exchange the bottle for a parcel of women? For shame, Jack, for shame! The punch is coming, dear lad: sit down—sit down.'

But Jack persisted, and I rose too.

'Go, then!' the Admiral roared, with a great oath. 'Go, then, for a brace of gulpins!'

The ladies, who expected nothing but an evening to themselves, as is generally their lot when the men are drinking together, were greatly astonished at our appearance.

'Indeed, Jack,' said Castilla, 'Luke, we know, does not disdain a dish of tea with us.

'She gave him a cup with her own hands.'

But you—oh! I fear you will find our beverage as insipid as our conversation.'

Formerly, Jack would have replied to this sally that, d'ye see, Luke was a grass comber and a land swab, but that for himself, there was no tea aboard ship, and a glass of punch or a bowl of flip was worth all the tea ever brought from China—or words to that effect. Now, however, he laughed, and said, 'Nay, Castilla, was I ever so rude as to find your conversation insipid? As for your tea, it will, certainly, since you make it, be more delicious than all the Admiral's port.'

At this she blushed again, and presently made the tea and gave him a cup with her own hands, hoping it was sweetened to his liking; and he drank it as if he was accustomed to taking it every day, though I know not when he had taken tea last. He would not, however, drink a second cup, which shows that he did not greatly admire its taste. Now, at the Rainbow, in Fleet Street, I have seen gentlemen who will take their six or seven cups of tea one after the other at a sitting. And the same

thing may be seen with ladies when the hissing urn has been brought in and the tea goes round.

Then Castilla asked him a hundred questions about his cruise and his battles, which Jack answered modestly and briefly, while still in his eyes I marked that look of admiration—I knew it well—growing deeper and more hungry, and Castilla, observing it too, continually blushed and stammered, and yet went on prattling, as if his looks fascinated her, as they say that in some countries a snake will so charm a bird that it will sit, still singing, until he darts upon it and swallows it up.

After this, he asked her to sing. Her voice was gentle and sweet, but of small power, and in the old days it had no charms for him, compared with the strong full voice which was at his service in the Apothecary's parlour. But she complied, and sang all the songs she knew in succession.

Jack listened, enthralled. 'Tis well,' he said, with a deep sigh, 'that we have no Castilla on board.'

'Why, Jack?'

'Because life would be so sweet that the men would not fight, for fear of being killed.'

'Thank you, Jack,' she said. 'I never expected so fine a compliment on my poor singing.'

'There never were any Sirens on board ship,' I said, clumsily. 'They are always on land, and sing to lure poor sailors to destruction.'

'Fie for shame, Luke!' cried Castilla. 'That was not prettily said. Am I trying to lure Jack to his destruction, pray?'

We all laughed; and yet, when one comes to think of that evening, I perceive that this innocent creature was actually and unconsciously playing the part of the ancient Siren, because she certainly lured the Lieutenant to the fate that awaited him.

Then Jack offered to sing, somewhat to my dismay, because I remembered certain songs which he had formerly bawled at the Gun Tavern and in the Apothecary's parlour. However, he now sang, his voice being modulated and greatly

softened, an old sea-song with a burden of 'As we ride on the tide when the stormy winds do blow' very movingly, so that the tears stood in Castilla's eyes.

We heard, in the next room, the voices of the Admiral and his guests growing louder and faster, and conjectured that the evening would be a short one. This speedily proved true, and the negroes wheeled every man home to his own house, except the Admiral, whom they carried upstairs. As for us, Madam went to sleep in a chair, and we sat down to a game of Ombre, Jack showing himself as pleased with the simple game we played as he had been with the tea and the singing. At the same time his eyes wandered from his cards to Castilla's face, and he played his cards badly, losing every game.

'I cannot remember, Jack,' said Castilla, when we finished, 'that you were fond of cards when last you were at home, unless it were All-fours.'

'He also played,' I said, 'Cribbage, Put, Laugh-and-lie-down, and Snip-snap-snorum'

—all of these being games over which, when played with Bess, he had shown great interest.

'Nay,' he replied, earnestly, 'I entreat you, Castilla, to forget wholly what manner of man that was who came home to you in rags. Think that he had been for two years among the Midshipmen, and then for three years among the savages and the Spaniards, and then was thrown into a French prison to mess with common sailors. If you do not forget that rude savage, forgive him, and understand that he has gone, and will no more be seen. As for the things he did, I look upon them with wonder. Why, if I remember aright, Luke, that sea-swab did not disdain to fight a smuggler fellow at Horn Fair before all his friends.'

'He did not, Jack,' I said. 'But we loved the sea-swab.'

'We should have loved him better, Luke,' said Castilla, gently, 'if he had given more of his company to ourselves and less to the Apothecary. I know how his afternoons were spent, sir.' She nodded and laughed, and he

changed colour and started; but, of course, Castilla knew nothing about Bess.

'He is gone,' Jack repeated, 'and I hope that a better man has taken his place. As for your society, Castilla, he must be an insensate wretch indeed who would not find himself happy when you are present.'

'Thank you, Jack;' she made him a curtsey and smiled, yet blushed a little. 'I perceive that another man indeed has taken his place. Poor honest Jack! He spoke his mind, and loved not girls. Yet we loved him—perhaps.' She looked up at him, but dropped her eyes beneath his ardent gaze. 'Perhaps, before long——'

'Perhaps, Castilla,' said Jack, earnestly, 'you may be able to love the new man better than the old.'

'It is late,' she said, blushing again. 'Good-night, Jack.' She gave him her hand, which he held for a moment, looking down upon the pretty slender creature with eyes full of love. And then she left us, and went to bed.

I declare solemnly that I had loved Castilla

ever since I could talk; yet in one evening this sailor made fiercer and more determined love to her than I in all those years. Indeed, as she hath since confessed to me, she knew not, and did not even so much as suspect, that I loved her.

'Come into the open, dear lad,' said Jack, presently, after a profound sigh. 'Let us go into the garden, and talk.'

In the garden, what with the twilight of the season and the full moon, it was as bright as day, though eleven o'clock was striking by St. Nicholas' Church clock. We walked upon the trim bowling-green, and talked.

'There is her bedroom,' said Jack, looking at the light in Castilla's chamber. 'See, she has put out the candle. She is lying down to sleep. What—oh, lad!—what can a creature like that, so delicate and so fragile, think of such rough, coarse animals as ourselves? Do you think that she can ever forget or forgive the rude things I have said to her? Do you think she remembers them, and would pay them back?'

'Jack, Castilla has nothing to remember or to forgive. Do you think she harbours resentment for the little rubs of her childhood?'

'She is all goodness, Luke; of that I am convinced. She is as good as she is truly beautiful; of that I need not to be told. As for her beauty, there is nothing in the world more lovely than the English blue eyes and fair hair. It is by special Providence, I suppose, and to reward us for hating the Pope and the French, that they are made as good as they are beautiful.'

'Did you always prefer fair hair to dark, Jack?' I asked, in wonder that a man should have so changed and should have forgotten so much.

'As for what I used to say and think, dear lad, let that never be mentioned between us. Why, it shames me to think of what an unmannerly cur I must have seemed to all, in those days. Talk not of them, Luke, my lad.'

Poor Bess! She was included among the things belonging to those days. I dared not question him further.

'It is our unhappiness,' he went on, 'that, though we would willingly remain on shore, honour and our own interest call us to go to sea again. Therefore, I know not how far a man who is at present only a Lieutenant might hope to win so fair a prize as Castilla. To be sure, she is a sailor's daughter, and knows what she would expect as a sailor's wife. Yet to leave her alone, and without protection! She would have you, to be sure, for her protector, while I am gone.'

Heavens! It was not yet three years since he had solemnly committed another woman to my care. Had he quite forgotten that?

'In a word, Jack,' I said, with bitterness in my heart, 'you have seen Castilla, since your return, but three or four hours, and you are already in love with her.'

'That is true,' he replied. 'I am in love with her. Why,' he laughed, 'you are thinking, I dare swear, of three years ago, when you caught me in a certain summer-house, kissing another girl.'

I acknowledged that I remembered the fact.

'Is she,' I asked, 'quite forgotten? Yet you swore that you loved her, and vowed constancy.'

'Well, my lad, every sailor is allowed to be in love as often as he comes ashore, for that matter. And, as for the girl—what was her name?—I believe I did make love to her for awhile. And now I hear that she is married, and already the mother of twins.'

'Who told you that?'

'Her father, the Penman.'

'But it is not true, Jack. How could he have told you such a thing? Bess hath never forgotten you.'

'True, or not true, I care not a rope's-end. I am in love with Castilla. Already, you say? Why a man who did not fall in love with this sweet creature at the very first sight of her would not be half a man. I expect to fight my way through a hundred suitors, to get her hand. The Admiral loves me, and I think he would willingly make me his son-in-law. But I must go to sea once more, before I can offer to marry her. Therefore, for her sake, I shall go to

London, and turn Courtier. I shall attend the nobleman who once promised me an appointment. He hath now, doubtless, forgotten both the making and the breaking of that promise. That matters nothing. I shall pay my court to him. I shall practise those arts by which men creep into snug places: it needs but a supple back and an oily tongue. Come to see me in a week or two, and I will wager that I shall be his Lordship's obedient servant, and that he will presently give me a command, if only of a pink; and that Castilla shall be promised to me.'

All these things came to pass, indeed. Yet the result was not, as you shall learn, what he looked for.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON